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MONOTHEISM AND YAHWEH'S APPROPRIATION OF BAAL

JAMES S. ANDERSON

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James S. Anderson

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It is only because of the enduring love and support of my father and mother that this work has been possible and it is with utmost affection and gratitude that I dedicate this work to them.

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To a large extent, we are products of those who went before us and those from whom we learn or under whom we study. Not only do voices from our past influence us in the present, but those family members from our past, whom we might not ever have known, still influence us today. They are part of us biologically or genetically, but perhaps the more significant legacy they left is passed on by what they imparted to those they raised, who in turn pass on their influence to us, and so on. We will probably do the same, inextricably binding us together, revealing that what we do now will have a bearing, however small, on other lives later on.

As part of this process, I am the product of those who went before me, those of my family whose generous and loving ways I continue to experience tangibly today.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ANEP	*The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament*. Edited by J. B. Prichard. 2nd edn. Princeton, 1969.
ANET	*Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Edited by J. B. Prichard. 3rd edn. Princeton, 1969.
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
BAR	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BN	*Biblische Notizen*
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis & Theology
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
ConBOT	Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament Series
COS	*The Context of Scripture*. Edited by W. W. Hallo. 3 vols. Leiden: Brill 1997–2002.
CTA	*Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques découvertes à Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 à 1939*. Edited by A. Herdner. Mission de Ras Shamra 10. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1963.
DCH	*The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Edited by D. J. A. Clines. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993–.
DDD	*Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* edited by Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking and Pieter W. van der Horst. 2nd rev. edn. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.
ER[2]	*Encyclopedia of Religion*. Edited by L. Jones. 15 vols. 2nd edn. Thompson Gale, 2005.
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IB	*Interpreter's Bible*. Edited by G. A. Buttrick et al. 12 vols. New York: Abington Press, 1951–7.
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JEOL	*Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Gezelschap (Genootschap) Ex oriente lux*
JHS	*Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*

JSOTS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
KAI	*Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*. H. Donner and W. Röllig. 2nd edn. Wiesbaden, 1966–9.
KTU	*The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts: from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places*. Edited by M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartin. 2nd enl. edn. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995.
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NEAEHL	*The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*. Edited by E. Stern. 4 vols. Jerusalem, 1993.
NETS	New English Translation of the Septuagint (ed. A. Pietersma; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OTE	*Old Testament Essays*
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SVT	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

Introduction

As a concept, monotheism has a huge importance for the history of ideas as well as for the personal and spiritual implications it has for millions of Jews, Christians and Muslims. The three main monotheistic faiths grew out of the monotheism that arose in the Southern Levant around the god Yahweh in the first millennium BCE. Logically, the development of monotheism in the ancient Near East and, more specifically, the Southern Levant has been the topic of much scholarly examination and debate, in particular by John Day and Mark Smith.[1] The present work adds to the discussion with a mostly synchronic reading of the Hebrew Bible, seeking to chart how biblical writers displayed Yahweh's appropriation of other deities and their domains as part of the larger development towards monotheism.

Undoubtedly, the ancients had no word for monotheism; it did not appear until the philosopher Henry More first used it in 1660 in his *The Grand Mystery of Godliness*.[2] Today, nuanced and sub-categorizations of the term can be found,[3] but all essentially share the same constituent elements. Namely, that monotheism is the belief in and worship of one god that concomitantly includes the denial that other gods exist, save messenger-type entities, which do not approximate to a god, but are above the category of a human being.

The literati of the region of Yehud situated in the Achaemenid province of Eber-Nari, or "Beyond the River," most likely had no word nor any clearly defined concept for a monotheism which implies the denial of any other gods' existence but one's own. The Hebrew Bible as a whole is not a monotheistic work in the modern sense of monotheism, as it often mentions other deities besides Yahweh. The explicit denial of the existence of several gods is an issue which arises in light

1. John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). Mark Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002). And most recently, Abel S. Sitali, "Jewish Monotheism: The Exclusivity of Yahweh in Persian Period Yehud (539–333 BCE)," PhD diss., Trinity Western University, 2014.

2. Nathan MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of 'Monotheism'* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 6–9.

3. For instance, categorizations such as ethical, radical or biblical types of monotheism.

of ontological questions. The notions of essence and existence are not found in the Hebrew Bible, so it is not surprising that the existence or non-existence of divine entities is missing from biblical texts. The focus of the bulk of biblical texts in Hebrew is on Yahweh's supremacy. Few are the passages that go as far as denying what we would call the existence, reality or actuality of other deities (mostly Ps. 82; Isa. 45–6).

For instance, Psalm 82, which ends up declaring the other members of the divine council to be mere mortals, remains within the framework of a plurality of deities. Moreover, it justifies the elimination of other gods on the basis of their purported failure to provide justice. Instead of being a theoretical treatise on monotheism, Psalm 82 conveniently blames the sons of God for the evil that is encountered in the world. Hence, it anticipates dualistic solutions to the problem of evil, maintaining some kind of divine *alter ego* of ambiguous status which can be blamed for all the evil and injustice in the world and thus exculpate the "other" god. This approach to theodicy is, in practice, the closest one can get to monotheism without going all the way to the logical implications of strict monotheism, which requires ascribing evil to the only god if he/she/it is really the only one, and really all-powerful.

The Book of Job gets close to this kind of truly exclusivist position, but implicitly so. The "satan" does not reappear at the end of the book and Yahweh seems to accept Job's case and takes the blame for the evil that befell innocent Job. This solution to the drama is resisted even by modern scholarly readers, for whom the writer supplied enough ambiguity to secure an escape route for those of his readers who could not face the logical but painful implications of the recognition that, if Yahweh is alone, he is as much responsible for injustice as for everything else.[4] Out of the bulk of the Hebrew Scriptures, only Isaiah 45.5–7 can be considered monotheistic in the modern sense of the term, as it explicitly states that Yahweh created both good and evil.

Faced with the dearth of strictly monotheistic biblical passages, it is necessary to accept a broader understanding of the term "monotheism" to describe religious ideations in Achaemenid Jerusalem.

To account for the inherent variety of monotheistic stances, the terms "monolatry, henotheism" and "pantheon" are often encountered in discussions of monotheism. Monolatry may be understood as the worship of one god without denying the existence of other gods. Henotheism is, essentially, the belief that certain human groups focused their worship upon one particular deity while neighboring groups chose their own god(s) or designated their god with a different name. Henotheism is often used to explain that Yahweh was the god of Israel, while Chemosh was the god of Moab, Milkom the god of Ammon and Qos the god of Edom, suggesting the term's relevance for the religious configuration in Iron Age Syro-Palestine. Henotheism, however, entails an oversimplification, as more than just these deities were venerated in these regions.

4. See Philippe Guillaume, "Dismantling the Deconstruction of Job," *JBL* 127 (2008): 491–9.

The term pantheon is virtually self-explanatory. It denotes the collection of deities in the divine realm thought to rule the cosmos. In the ancient Near East, a pantheon was usually headed by a divine couple and comprised several tiers.

To render the complexity of the monotheistic phenomenon, Denis Baly distinguished four major types of monotheisms: primitive monotheism, proto-monotheism, pseudo-monotheism and absolute monotheism.[5] These categories may well be useful when one attempts to compare world religions displaying monotheistic tendencies. A comparative analysis is, however, not the focus of the present enquiry. As the range here is restricted to passages in the Hebrew Scriptures, it did not seem of much heuristic value to produce terms and definitions to distinguish monotheistic stances that seem to accept the presence or existence of other gods as subordinate to Yahweh from stances which seem to exclude the existence of all other gods besides Yahweh. As mentioned above, the notion of existence is foreign to the Hebrew Bible, or at least it is not explicit. Therefore, the term "monotheism" is used throughout this volume in a broad sense to include the various attitudes to the status of Yahweh vis-à-vis other gods displayed in the Hebrew Bible. It is clear that the Yehudite scribes did not have a term for monotheism, or polytheism, for that matter, though they preserved and produced many texts dealing with Yahweh's supremacy, if not uniqueness.

As the examination of the relevant evidence makes clear, Iron Age Israel and Judah worshipped a small pantheon headed by Yahweh and Asherah. The Hebrew Bible evinces the co-opting of Asherah by Yahweh as Yahweh takes over her domain: presiding over care of the womb, childbirth and child-rearing activities. Other domains, which Canaanite religions ascribed specifically to Baal, were also transferred to Yahweh, such as the rule over the Rephaim and the care of these deified ancestors:

> As monotheism developed, it was only natural that Yahweh would have had to assume all the roles formerly associated with his wife, the lesser gods and divinized ancestors. As the only divinity in heaven, he had to take control of a wide range of functions: the natural order, justice, rainfall, animal fertility, human fertility, plague and other death-causing agents, death itself, healing, and protecting family lands and interests.[6]

A process of appropriation on the part of Yahweh was a prerequisite for monotheism to dawn, and this work will demonstrate how virtually all scholars concur, though to differing extents, that Yahweh accrued or appropriated other deities and their domains. The process by which the traits and imagery from other numen were transferred to Yahweh has not yet been clearly delineated, though it is crucial to the genesis of biblical monotheism. This work provides an answer to the question of how biblical texts display Yahweh's appropriation of other

5. Denis Baly, "The Geography of Monotheism," in *Translating and Understanding the Old Testament* (eds H. T. Frank and W. Reed; Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 253–78 (257).

6. Diana V. Edelman et al., *Opening the Books of Moses* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2012), 135.

deities and their domains as part of the process toward monotheism. The specific contribution of the present volume to the understanding of the development of Yahwistic monotheism is in the analysis of biblical texts which betray the transfer to Yahweh of traits, imagery and duties belonging to several gods. The transfer of elements is most prominently observed in instances of the co-opting of Baal and his domain. The work thus provides a typology for categorizing all biblical instances that display the takeover or appropriation by Yahweh of other deities and their respective domains.

So far, Mark Smith's work on monotheism has gone the furthest in articulating a process by which Yahweh appropriated other deities' domains, though it does not address the specifics of what the process entailed.[7] The present work delves into the specifics of what Smith calls convergence. Smith combines convergence and differentiation into a heuristic model to explain the triumph of Yahwistic monotheism.[8] Convergence is basically Yahweh's taking over characteristics and traditions that belonged to other divinities; it is the coalescence of traits into Yahweh.[9] Smith notes that polemics played a role in the process of convergence. The presence of polemics shows that Yahweh embodied the traits of the very deities that are condemned.[10]

Smith does not elaborate on this point, but Yairah Amit offers a very useful typology of polemics within the Hebrew Bible which can help to identify the appropriation of Baal's domain through outright polemical texts.[11] Amit identifies several kinds of polemics, and distinguishes explicit polemics from implicit and hidden polemics. Amit has shown that the presence of polemics in the Hebrew Bible presupposes a variety of ideological debates within the society in which the texts arose. She observes that polemics in the Hebrew Bible display the grappling of a writer with particular issues of the day. Yahweh's supremacy and the status of the gods of the pantheon were particularly debated subjects. The present work modifies Amit's categories of polemics to make them relevant to texts in the Hebrew Bible where Yahweh appropriates the characteristic of other gods. Such "appropriation texts" are classified as polemical, implied polemical and non-polemical transference texts.

According to Smith, differentiation, by contrast with convergence, involves the rejection of some of Yahweh's traits deemed Canaanite. It distinguishes Yahwism over and against the gods of the neighboring countries. Smith's model accounts for

7. Smith, *Early History*.

8. Smith, *Early History*, 7 n.12 footnotes Baruch Halpern in regards to convergence and he refers to Frank M. Cross in relation to differentiation.

9. Smith, *Early History*, 7–9. On page 58, Smith writes, "The convergence of titles and imagery of deities to the personage of Yahweh appears to have been part of a wider religious development of conflation of religious motifs in Israelite tradition". See also Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 151.

10. Smith, *Early History*, 9.

11. Yairah Amit, *Hidden Polemics in Biblical Narrative* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

Yahweh's appropriation of other deities' domains for the emergence of monotheistic Yahwism; however, what he calls convergence needs to be analyzed in detail, and several caveats for issues arising out of his work are addressed in Chapter 1.

Chapter 1 first lays out two mutually-exclusive paradigms accounting for the rise of Yahwistic monotheism operative amongst biblical scholars today: the early-monotheistic Yahwism paradigm and the native pantheon paradigm. This is followed in Chapter 2 with an examination of the relevant textual and artefactual evidence (Kuntillet ʿAjrud, Khirbet el-Qom, Arad, Elephantine and elsewhere), leading to the recognition of the native pantheon paradigm as more appropriate to account for the rise of monotheism in the Hebrew Bible.

Chapter 3 provides a conceptual framework to explain how biblical texts that show Yahweh's appropriation of other deities and their domains can be classified into separate categories. As the majority of appropriation texts refer to Baal, a thorough examination of non-biblical texts pertaining to this deity is undertaken in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 examines the appropriation of Baal by Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible in overtly polemical texts, the first category in the appropriation typology advanced in this work. This constitutes the longest chapter in the volume, as polemics against Baal are ubiquitous in the biblical corpus.

Chapter 6 deals with the remaining two types of texts that reveal appropriation: implied polemical and non-polemical transference texts. Chapter 6 further addresses the issue of the difficulty posed by the possibility that Yahweh, like Baal, could, originally, have been a storm-god.

Finally, Chapter 7 offers a diachronic reconstruction of the main stages of Yahwistic monotheism. I fully acknowledge the difficulty of reconstructing a picture of the religions of Israelite and Judahite in the Iron Age. Besides the limited amount of artefactual remains and extra-biblical textual evidence, biblical texts tend to display cultural memory, rather than being objective reports of the situation they claim to reflect. The religious practices in these societies were not as monolithic as their portrayal in the Hebrew Bible suggests. Yet, the polemics which transpire in the texts analyzed in the present volume cannot be dismissed simply because they do not reflect "reality." For all its exaggeration, the violence of the indictment must be taken into account. The portrayal of the religions of Israel and Judah, in particular the militant Baalism which is attributed to King Ahab in the stories of Elijah, begs for a new understanding of the time and location of the genesis of Yahwistic monotheism. This is the burden of the final chapter.

Chapter 1

Monotheism Paradigms: A History of the Discussion

Two mutually exclusive paradigms account for the emergence of monotheism in twentieth-century Hebrew Bible scholarship. The first paradigm was long the only one since it adhered closely to the overall biblical scenario. It is best described as the belief in an early-monotheistic Yahwism.

1.1 The Early-Monotheistic Model

The early-monotheistic model is based on the idea of a pristine form of monotheism, which originated with Moses but was corrupted through contact with the Canaanites once the Israelites entered the Promised Land. The Book of Judges is built upon this very notion. As soon as the generation of Joshua died out, the Israelites abandoned Yahweh (Judg. 2.11), only to repent temporarily after being oppressed by an enemy sent by Yahweh to chastise them.[1] With King Solomon's diplomatic marriages, the gods of the surrounding countries were officially introduced to Israel and Judah, and the people began to follow other gods, more or less abandoning Yahweh altogether. Yahweh's jealousy was kindled and, as the biblical scenario goes, he sent his prophets to warn of the disasters he was about to send if Israel did not mend its ways and return to Mosaic monotheism. Despite Elijah's and Jehu's anti-Baal crusades, Israel never gave up the sin of Jeroboam (1 Kgs 15.34). In his anger Yahweh sent the Arameans and then the Assyrians to mete out the long-overdue punishment. In the kingdom of Judah, the situation was slightly better. Thanks to reforming monarchs such as Hezekiah and Josiah, Jerusalem withstood the Assyrians, but polytheism was so deeply entrenched that the kingdom eventually fell to the Babylonians.

1. On the cycle of oppression and deliverance in the Book of Judges, see Philippe Guillaume, *Waiting for Josiah: the Judges* (JSOTS, 385; London/New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 114–17.

After a century of archaeological excavation in Israel/Palestine, enough evidence has been gathered to suggest that the neat biblical scenario does not indisputably reflect the reality on the ground. It was never meant to do so. First, the Exodus, the Conquest and the days of the Judges belong to a periodization that enabled the organization of the books of the Hebrew Scriptures to follow a chronological sequence. Chronology, however, does not imply historicity. It is hardly possible to synchronize the days of Moses with a particular Egyptian dynasty and Joshua's conquest, as much as the days of the Judges are increasingly recognized as literary constructions that cannot be synchronized with chronologies based on fourteenth century datings and pottery sequences.

While the reports on the reigns of Rehoboam and Jeroboam in the Book of Kings establish a synchronism, the historical reliability of which has been more or less confirmed by Assyrian sources, the same cannot be said about the biblical figures and events mentioned in the Torah and in the books of Joshua, Judges and Samuel. The many chronological markers found in the Torah and the Prophets belong to an elaborate chronology which made the introduction of Jewish literature into the thriving intellectual scene of Hellenism possible by synchronizing the biblical flood with Greek, Egyptian and Mesopotamian flood accounts.[2] All biblical figures prior to Jeroboam belong to the mythological past, as do their Egyptian, Greek and Mesopotamian counterparts. Like other founding figures, Moses escapes temporal contingencies. First revealed to him in the Wilderness, Moses inaugurates Yahwistic monotheism "in the beginning." With the other beginning in Genesis 1, the number of years between Creation and the Exodus can be reckoned, but this does not mean that the days of Moses and the emergence of monotheism can be dated in absolute chronological terms.

While the major chronological divergences transmitted in the Hebrew, Samaritan and Alexandrian texts reveal the coexistence of competing chronological systems, neither system can be used to date the emergence of Mosaic monotheism. Until the rise of historicism in the eighteenth century CE, Jews and Christians felt no need to attribute a precise date to the revelation of monotheism at Sinai. It was enough to attribute "pure" monotheism to Moses and then follow the biblical scenario which correlates the corruption of Moses' monotheism with the settlement of the children of Israel in the Promised Land. Interacting with Midianites already in the Wilderness and then with the local population in Canaan, the Israelites forsook Yahweh and followed foreign gods, turning the original monotheism into polytheism. Improving on the biblical designation of this process as idolatry (Hos. 1–3; Jer. 5.7–8), biblical scholarship evoked syncretism and described the worship of other gods as popular religion. Despite this scholarly veneer, the discourse adhered to the overall biblical scheme: strict Yahwistic monotheism was born in the days of Moses. The worship of other gods besides Yahweh remained later deviations from the model established by Moses centuries earlier.

2. See L. L. Grabbe, "Chronography in Hellenistic Jewish Historiography," in *SBL 1979 Seminar Paper* (ed. P. J. Hachtmeier; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979), vol. II: 43–68.

The gradual and often painful realization that biblical archaeology discredits rather than confirms the historicity of the Bible brought about a paradigm shift. It became clear that the ancient theologians had attributed the emergence of monotheism to Moses, in the mythological past, in the Wilderness, when Israel was protected from interaction with its neighbors. In this way, Moses' monotheism could function as a model, the paradigm upon which the entire Bible is constructed. As a model, Moses' monotheism could not and should not be dated any more than should Joshua's conquest or the days of the Judges. A paradigm shift had to occur if the non-historicity of the first half of the biblical scenario was to be taken seriously.

The paradigm shift required an alternative understanding of the emergence of monotheism. This alternative model is designated throughout the present study as the "native pantheon model." This model is presented in the next section (§1.2). It is enough here to explain that it holds that there existed a native Israelite-Judahite pantheon headed by Yahweh and Asherah. The rise of monotheism occurred later, as the consequence of the collapse of the original pantheon into Yahweh alone. Instead of postulating an original monotheism later perverted by polytheistic influences, this model takes biblical and archaeological evidence of polytheism as reflections of actual belief systems and practices during the monarchic period, in the Iron Age II.

For the most part, adherents of the early-monotheistic Yahwism paradigm share a common, underlying belief in the historicity of the Hebrew Bible, ascribed to religious convictions and related theological biases. The demographics of these adherents transcend the borders of nationality and faith traditions. The early-monotheistic model resonates with faith traditions, be they Protestant, Catholic or Jewish, traditions that lean toward a literal reading of the biblical text and hold the Bible to be a collection of historical documents. This model is most at home in some Protestant traditions, which broaden the application of the *sola scriptura* principle to the study of the past. The categories of syncretism and popular religion invoked by adherents of this paradigm are convenient ways to dismiss any evidence that could indicate that the religions of Israel and Judah might have constituted something other than Moses' pure form of monotheism. Before listing some scholars who adhere to the early-monotheistic paradigm, a few caveats are in order.

In noting the more prominent adherents of the two paradigms that account for the rise of biblical monotheism, this examination does not purport to present an exhaustive list of the different scholars in each model, nor does it assume that the work of particular scholars is monolithic. Scholars evolve as much as scholarship. Consequently, some might take issue with my positioning of certain scholars. Certain scholars' early work suggests they followed the early-monotheistic Yahwism model, while their later work is more congruent with the native pantheon model. In addition to this inherent difficulty, the task of analyzing the work of scholars for the purpose of ascertaining their views on monotheism is complicated by attempts to harmonize mutually exclusive models. There is certainly a range of scholarly approaches to the origin of monotheism,

but, ultimately, scholars have to decide whether monotheism goes back to Moses, or if it is an internal development growing out of a native matrix in which the pantheon later merged into Yahweh.

1.1.1 William Foxwell Albright

William Foxwell Albright and his students form the vanguard of the most recognizable subgroup of the early-monotheistic Yahwism model. In 1941 Albright wrote that "Monotheism formed an essential part of Mosaic religion from the beginning."[3] Albright was a giant in the field of Near Eastern and Biblical Studies, thanks to his command of multiple fields and his ability to synthesize archaeological and philological finds with the biblical text. His study of the Bible in terms of cognate literatures and cultures continues to be important and his linguistic prowess remains admirable. The irony is that Albright's work represents a step backward in scholarship. In large measure, his work can be understood as a reaction to German source criticism and its proponent, Julius Wellhausen.[4] Wellhausen's *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* situated the so-called Priestly source in the Exile, naturally calling into question the historicity of the Pentateuch. Perhaps Albright feared that these ideas would open a Pandora's box for, if the prophets preceded the law, the next logical step would then be that the emergence of monotheism was a product of the Exile or later.

Albright basically accepted the biblical version of events, though they are often presented in competing accounts and versions. This faith in the biblical scenario probably owed much to his religious upbringing as a Methodist. Albright's assumptions were rooted in American pietism, especially after World War II, when the Biblical Theology movement and its emphasis on revelation predominated. Albright's ideas were influential, as he was academically involved with over 57 doctoral students at Johns Hopkins and published 20 books and over 1,000 articles and reviews.[5] This Renaissance man of the twentieth century never wavered from his underlying presupposition of the "monotheistic character of Mosaic Yahwism" and his belief that, essentially, "orthodox Yahwism remained the same from Moses to Ezra."[6] He passed on these sentiments to his students who, in turn, propagated and disseminated Albrightianism in American circles and overseas.

3. William Foxwell Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 177. See also his *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (New York: Doubleday, 1957) and *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (New York: Doubleday, 1968).

4. No doubt Albright also wanted to refute Wellhausen's counterpart in England, W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972).

5. Peter Machinist, "William Foxwell Albright: The Man and His Work," in *The Study of the Ancient Near East in the 21st Century: The William Foxwell Albright Centennial Conference* (eds J. S. Cooper and G. M. Schwartz; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 386.

6. Albright, *Archaeology*, 96, 175.

1.1.2 The Albrightians

The early-monotheistic Yahwism model reached beyond American circles. The model was embraced by scholars of differing nationalities who shared the religious beliefs of its adherents. The paradigm's implicit assumption that biblical accounts are historically reliable made it readily acceptable across national borders and across the boundaries of faith traditions.

Although their work appears tempered or divergent when placed beside Albright's, the late Frank Moore Cross[7] and the late David Noel Freedman have done much to perpetuate Albright's views via the universities of Harvard and Michigan, respectively. Two other students of Albright's, whose works are infused with the notion of a pure form of monotheism going back to Moses, are George Ernest Wright and John Bright.[8] Edmond Jacob and P. van Imschoot were also largely influenced by Albright's views on monotheism, although they did not train under him.[9] Helmer Ringgren, George Fohrer and Harry Thomas Frank also belong to the Albrightians, as their work provides salient examples of descriptions of the evidence of polytheism as syncretistic aberrations.[10] Irving Zeitlin, Jeffrey Tigay and Jeaneane Fowler can be added to the Albrightians who did not study under Albright himself.[11]

A third generation of Albrightians studied under F. M. Cross, for example Patrick D. Miller, and even E. Theodore Mullen Jr., who belongs there although his Harvard dissertation was an examination of the pantheon/divine council in Canaanite and Hebrew literature.[12] Stating that "Israelite tradition adopted the Canaanite concept of the assembly in toto …", Mullen understands the motif of the council in Hebrew literature as syncretism, which must imply an early form of pure monotheism that was later corrupted.[13]

Another dissertation supervised by F. M. Cross focuses on the goddess Asherah. Regarding the finds at Kuntillet Ajrud, which juxtapose Yahweh and Asherah,

7. Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

8. John Bright, *A History of Israel* (3rd edn, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981).

9. Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (trans. A. Heathcote and P. Allcock; New York: Harper & Row, 1958); P. van Imschoot, *Théologie de l'Ancient Testament* (Paris: Tournay, 1954).

10. See Robert Karl Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel* (JSOTS, 241; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 67.

11. Irving Zeitlin, *Ancient Judaism: Biblical Criticism from Max Weber to the Present* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984). Jeffrey H. Tigay, *You Shall have No Other Gods: Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986). Jeaneane Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew: A Comparative Study* (JSOTS, 49; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988).

12. Patrick D. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (London: SPCK, 2000). E Theodore Mullen, Jr., *The Assembly of the Gods: The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (HSM, 24; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980).

13. Mullen Jr., *Assembly*, 283.

Walter A. Maier III contends that the finds "indicate a syncretistic environment."[14] With his early dating of biblical texts, a hallmark of this model, Alberto R. W. Green is an Albrightian,[15] along with William H. C. Propp.[16] It should also be observed that Albright was not alone in championing this approach. In Israel, Yehezkel Kaufmann argued in like manner, albeit more conservatively.[17]

Scholars who describe the religions of Israel and Judah as monolatrous or henotheistic use the early-monotheistic Yahwism paradigm implicitly and in a more nuanced way, but they nevertheless remain within the bounds of the model. Monolatrous or henotheistic categories reflect attempts at harmonizing textual and artefactual evidence with the supposition that a pure form of monotheism originally existed under Moses. Defining monolatry as the worship of one god without denying the existence of others precludes acceptance of a pantheon. Monolatry is often used in conjunction with the term "henotheism" to articulate the idea that Yahweh was the god of Israel and Judah, while other nations had their own god, Qos in Edom, Milcom in Ammon and Chemosh in Moab. Monolatry and henotheism marginalize evidence of a pantheon as well as any evidence of polytheism in Israel and Judah. Therefore, monolatry and henotheism are code words for an implicit early-monotheistic Yahwism position. The tacit position is that monotheism goes back to Moses. It was perverted until it triumphed via Josiah's reforms or the Exile.

A harmonizing tendency is apparent in some nuanced early-monotheistic Yahwism approaches, which go as far as admitting that Yahweh had a wife, Asherah. The presence of Asherah, however, is still understood as an aberration due to syncretism or as a manifestation of popular religion. These scholars readily admit that passages in the Hebrew Bible betray the existence of a pantheon, but they understand these passages as a reflection of outside influences and borrowed Canaanite motifs.[18] Some might even contend that Yahweh was the

14. Walter A. Maier, III, *Asherah: Extrabiblical Evidence* (HSM, 37; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 169.

15. Alberto R. W. Green, *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East* (Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego 8; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 274. Green dates some poetic texts in the Hebrew Bible between the twelfth and tenth centuries BCE.

16. William H. C. Propp, "Monotheism and Moses: The Problem of Early Israelite Religion," *UF* 31 (1999): 537–75 (553) argues that Akhenaten's Amarna revolution, which instituted the seemingly monotheistic worship of Aten, had more impact on Yahwism than scholars acknowledge: "we must accept as at least plausible the tradition that Israel's monotheism dates back to the nation's origins, when the influence of Amarna is most expected."

17. Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel from Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* (trans. and abbrev. M. Greenberg; New York: Schocken, 1972).

18. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 193 contended that these Canaanite influences, which assumed a functioning pantheon, were "depotentized and demythologized rapidly." Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 186 understands the pantheon to be "derivative in substantial part

head of a pantheon which later collapsed, but they do not concede that Yahweh's kingship over the pantheon was an internal, native Israelite-Judahite development.[19] Rather, Yahweh would have come in from outside and usurped leadership of the existing Canaanite pantheon.[20] Ultimately, someone adopting this position must be classified as a proponent of the early-monotheistic paradigm, for this view and one that assumes a native Israelite-Judahite pantheon development for monotheism are mutually exclusive.

André Lemaire's *The Birth of Monotheism: The Rise and Disappearance of Yahwism* illustrates how the concept of monolatry in no way challenges the early-monotheistic paradigm. Lemaire speaks of monotheism as a product of the sixth century BCE.[21] and argues that the early "Mosaic Yahwism"[22] was monolatrous rather than monotheistic.[23] Although he pays lip service to the fact that several biblical texts attest to a pantheon,[24] he argues instead for the existence of monolatry. As would be consistent with monolatry and in what appears to be an uncritical position regarding Asherah, Lemaire maintains, "There is no indication that such a goddess was worshipped in Judah or Israel." For him, "YHWH did not have a consort."[25] P. Kyle McCarter Jr. advances a similar view when he claims that the Baals and the Astartes were the "local cults of foreign gods and goddesses."[26]

Other Albrightians adopt the nomenclature of syncretism and popular/folk religion to describe textual and artefactual evidence that does not fit their notions of an early Yahwism. Rainer Albertz accepts that there is no archaeological and textual evidence for exclusive Yahwism before the ninth century in Israel, but nevertheless mentions "Omride diplomatic syncretism," thus betraying

from the mythology of El." Even though Cross argues that Yahweh originated as an epithet for El, he writes that the pantheon motif was borrowed from Canaanite El imagery. See also Richard S. Hess, *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 161.

19. See Hess, *Israelite Religion.*

20. See Gnuse, *No Other Gods*, 197.

21. André Lemaire, *The Birth of Monotheism: The Rise and Disappearance of Yahwism* (Washington, DC: Biblical Archeology Society, 2007), 109.

22. Lemaire, *Birth of Monotheism*, 34.

23. Lemaire, *Birth of Monotheism*, 28.

24. Lemaire, *Birth of Monotheism*, 44–5.

25. Lemaire, *Birth of Monotheism,* 62.

26. P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *1 Samuel* (AB 8; Garden City: Doubleday, 1980), 215. See also P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., "The Religious Reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah," in *Aspects of Monotheism: How God is One* (eds H. Shanks and J. Meinhardt; Washington, DC: Biblical Archeology Society, 1997), 57–80, a salient example of an early-monotheistic Yahwism proponent who advocates the monolatry approach by applying the concept of hypostatization to anything that threatens the early-monotheism assumption. Green, *Storm-God*, 226 refers to a time of monolatrous Yahwism.

early-monotheistic assumptions.[27] Hence, Marjo C. A. Korpel interprets the epigraphic evidence for the worship of a goddess in Israel and Judah as part of folk religion, in contradistinction to state-sanctioned, official religion.[28] Other representatives of this approach include Raymond B. Dillard, Tremper Longman III, Richard S. Hess, Ernest W. Nicholson, Conrad L'Heureux, Tikva Frymer-Kensky[29] and Baruch Halpern.[30] Although his work is completely different, J. C. de Moor should be included here because he argues that monotheism emerged in the second millennium BCE.[31] John Day is also an Albrightian and his work will be of use in what follows, as it is helpful and germane to the present study.[32]

27. Rainer Albertz, "Social History of Ancient Israel," in *Understanding the History of Ancient Israel* (ed. H. G. M. Williamson; Oxford University Press, 2007), 359–60. See also Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (trans. John Bowden; 2 vols, London: SCM Press Ltd, 1994), 347–67 (207–10).

28. Marjo C. A. Korpel, "Asherah outside Israel," in *Only One God? Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah* (eds B. Becking and M. Dijkstra; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 147. Folk religion is a synonym for popular religion. For an archaeologist who uses the term "folk religion" see William G. Dever, "Folk Religion in Early Israel: Did Yahweh Have a Consort?" in *Aspects of Monotheism* (eds H. Shanks and J. Meinhardt; Washington, DC: Biblical Archeology Society, 1997), 27–56.

29. Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture, and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 83–99.

30. Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); Richard S. Hess, *Israelite Religions: An Archaeological and Biblical Survey* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); Ernest W. Nicholson, *God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), 191–217; Conrad E. L'Heureux, "Searching for the Origins of God," in *Traditions in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith* (eds B. Halpern and J. D. Levenson; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 33–57; Baruch Halpern, "Brisker Pipes than Poetry: The Development of Israelite Monotheism," in *Judaic Perspectives on Ancient Israel* (eds J. Neusner et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 77–115; Baruch Halpern, *From Gods to God: The Dynamics of Iron Age Cosmologies* (FAT 63; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

31. J. C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism* (rev. edn; BETL XCI; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997).

32. John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (JSOTS, 265; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000); John Day, "Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan," in *Ein Gott allein? JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte* (eds W. Dietrich and A. Klopfenstein; Fribourg: University Press, 1994), 181–96. Yet, the native pantheon model appears in Day's discussion of Tigay's work on onomastic evidence. In John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 228, he writes, "My overall conclusion is that Yahweh was very much the chief god in ancient Israel, and the other gods and goddesses would have been worshipped as part of his pantheon, but the frequency of their worship has been underestimated by Tigay." In spite of his use of the term "pantheon" to denote religion in Israel, Day's works taken as a

1.2 The Native Pantheon Model

The impetus towards the second paradigm, the native Israelite-Judahite pantheon headed by Yahweh and Asherah collapsed into Yahweh, appears to come by way of a growing understanding of Israel's and Judah's native origins in the land as well as archaeological finds. No doubt Albrecht Alt's 1929 seminal essay, *The God of the Fathers*, followed by the monumental finds at Ugarit, were precipitating factors.[33] For many, the weight of both textual and artefactual evidence militated against the understanding of a monotheism that goes back to Moses. It is more difficult to trace the contours of the inception of this model, but it appears to have sprung up in several schools, among scholars of differing nationalities, who arrived at this conclusion independently, thus bolstering its superiority over and against the early-monotheistic Yahwism paradigm.

Contrary to an assumption propagated by its opponents, proponents of the native pantheon model are rarely motivated by a desire to disparage, repudiate or attack religious faith. The native pantheon paradigm better accounts for the evidence by contextualizing biblical texts and archaeological artefacts.

A caveat is in order here: Scholars who espouse this model articulate the emergence of monotheism differently and do not all state that a pantheon collapsed into Yahweh, even though their work displays an affinity with such an understanding.

One can trace the inception of this model in Bernhard Lang's work, which builds on the work of Morton Smith.[34] Lang argues that "temporary monolatry in times of war can be considered the prototype or embryonic form of the Yahweh-alone idea and thus the precursor of monotheism." This temporary monolatry came about as the focus on a single god was thought to be more effective in times of war. Lang finds evidence of temporary monolatry in the Book of Judges and in the wider Mesopotamian world. He thinks it took root first in northern Israel, before coming to Judah. In his estimation an "incipient monotheism" later came about in the eighth and seventh centuries, when the ongoing pressure from the Assyrians turned the temporary worship of Yahweh alone into an ingrained cult and the people never reverted back to the worship of other gods. Lang also sees borrowing from the understandings of heads of other pantheons in the ancient world when articulating their deity, Yahweh. A few examples of deities who

whole fall into the early-monotheistic model. The title of his book, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, suggests a continuation of Albright's *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*. Having said that, Day's work is very helpful in understanding religion in ancient Israel and Judah.

33. Albrecht Alt, "The God of the Fathers," in *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (trans. R. A. Wilson; New York: Doubleday, 1968).

34. Bernhard Lang, *Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority: An Essay in Biblical History and Sociology* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983).

probably influenced the conception and articulation of Yahweh include Aten, Amen-Re, El, Ashur, Marduk and Ahura Mazda.[35]

Gösta Ahlström can also be viewed as one of the main precursors of this model.[36] Two of Ahlström's former students, Lowell K. Handy and Diana Edelman, made significant contributions to the field. Handy produced an important work on the pantheon in Israel and Judah entitled *Among the Host of Heaven*. He argues persuasively for a four-tiered pantheon being a reflection of the bureaucratic structures in the mundane realm below.[37] Diana Edelman produced an important collection of essays entitled *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms*. In the introduction, she argues for a shift in the conceptualization of the pantheon under the Persians. Thus, she dates the collapse of the Judahite pantheon and the emergence of the concept of Elohim to reflect the new abstract godhead in the Persian era.[38]

Ziony Zevit's 2001 monumental synthesis presupposes a pantheon in Israel and Judah.[39] He points out that, "Any description of the religions of Israel must therefore take into account that most Israelites, Yahwists in the main knew their patron, to whom they called by name, knew his consort Asherah, and knew other deities as well, to whom they referred by the general idioms, *bny 'lym* …"[40] Susan Ackerman's work falls into this approach, particularly her work pertaining to the Queen of Heaven.[41] S. M. Olyan belongs to this school as well,[42] along with others who accept Asherah's worship in Israel and Judah as a native phenomenon. Philip Davies' work does much to invalidate the position that a pure form of Mosaic monotheism once existed.[43] Ernst Axel Knauf postulates the existence of an "official pantheon of Jerusalem" and notes that it was the "fifth-century

35. Bernhard Lang, *The Hebrew God: Portrait of an Ancient Deity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) 185–8.

36. G. W. Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine from the Palaeolithic Period to Alexander's Conquest* (JSOTS, 146; Sheffield; Sheffield Academic Press, 1993); G. W. Ahlström, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion* (trans. E. Sharpe; Lund: Gleerup, 1963). Although the title of this work mentions syncretism, this is really a misnomer, as his works postulate a native pantheon.

37. Lowell K. Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven: The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994).

38. Diana Edelman, "Introduction," in *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaism* (ed. D. Edelman; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 15–27 (22–3).

39. Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches* (London: Continuum, 2001).

40. Zevit, *Religions of Ancient Israel*, 652.

41. Susan Ackerman, "The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel," *JBL* 112 (1993): 385–401.

42. S. M. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel* (SBLMS 34; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988).

43. Philip R. Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'* (JSOTS, 148; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).

Deuteronomists who projected … monotheism, into Israel's very beginnings."[44] Neils Peter Lemche also contributed to the understanding of this school along with Herbert Niehr and Thomas Thompson.[45]

1.2.1 Mark Smith

Mark S. Smith is one of the most prolific authors when it comes to the development of monotheism and Yahweh's relationship to other deities in the pantheon.[46] Yet, at times, one senses that his articulation of Yahweh's identification with El does view Yahweh's kingship over the pantheon not as a native development. On the one hand, he argues that Yahweh was a member of the second tier of the pantheon, and his ascendancy to the first tier occurred through his association with the supreme deity, El, when these tiers collapsed or coalesced;[47] on the other hand, Smith wants to have Yahweh coming in from outside, from the south, as a storm-god.[48] As one pieces together and extrapolates from Smith's work, one must wonder whether coming in from outside, joining and eventually usurping the pantheon, really coheres with the understanding of Yahweh's rise as a native Israelite-Judahite development. Smith is an example of how complicated trying to classify scholars can be.

An evolution can be seen in Smith's writings. He originally placed Asherah at Ugarit on a lower tier than El.[49] At one time he contended that cultic symbols of Asherah were retained in Yahweh's cult, without maintaining any connection with the goddess. In this case, Asherah was more a symbol than a goddess in Israel or Judah.[50] Later, Smith changed his mind. He dropped the term "monolatry" that

44. Ernst Axel Knauf, "Bethel: The Israelite Impact on Judean Language and Literature," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (eds O. Lipschits and M. Oeming; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 291–349 (293 n.13).

45. Niels Peter Lemche, *Ancient Israel: A New History of Israelite Society* (The Biblical Seminar, 5; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988); Herbert Niehr, "Israelite Religion and Canaanite Religion," in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah* (eds Francesca Stavrakopoulou and John Barton; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 23–36 (31); H. Niehr, "The Rise of YHWH in Judahite and Israelite Religion: Methodological and Religio-Historical Aspects," in *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms* (ed. D. Edelman; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 45–72; Thomas L. Thompson, *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

46. Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God*; Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*; Mark S. Smith, *The Memoirs of God: History, Memory, and the Experience of the Divine in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004).

47. Smith, *Origins*, 49.

48. Smith, *Origins*, 143–6; Smith, *Early History*, 33; see Deut. 33.2, Judg. 5.4, Hab. 3.3 and Ps. 68.8.

49. Mark S. Smith, "Divine Travel as a Token of Divine Rank", *UF* 16 (1984): 359.

50. Lowell K. Handy, review of Mark S. Smith *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 52 (1993): 158; Smith, *Early History*, 108–47 (133).

he had used in his previous works,[51] and argued that Asherah was El's consort at Ugarit and that, when Yahweh merged with El, Yahweh and Asherah became the head of the Judean pantheon.[52]

Smith's notions of a "convergence and differentiation" strategy, mentioned above in the introduction, are taken up in the present study. Also of merit are his claims that monotheistic texts in the Hebrew Bible are demonstrably late,[53] that the original god of Israel was El, because of Israel's theophoric element,[54] and his view that the god of an Exodus group was El.[55]

By contrast, Smith's use of the human family projected into the heavenly realm to explain a four-tiered pantheon which later collapsed[56] is less compelling than Handy's view of a pantheon mirroring earthly bureaucratic structures.[57]

1.2.2 The Iconography School

Othmar Keel and Christoph Uehlinger are more transparent cases of scholars who shifted from the early-monotheistic to the native pantheon model.[58] These two scholars were at the forefront of the effort to bring iconography to bear on the history of Israelite and Judahite religions. At first, they originally appeared hesitant to interpret the inscriptional attestations of "Yahweh and his Asherah" as evidence of Asherah as a female deity, arguing instead that an asherah was a cultic symbol associated with Yahweh that mediated his blessing.[59]

51. Smith, *Early History*, 49, 84, 196–9; *Origins*, 154.

52. Smith, *Memoirs of God,* 110–11.

53. Smith, *Origins*, 150 contends that one cannot find a monotheistic text before the seventh century BCE.

54. Smith, *Early History*, 32; Smith, *Origins*, 142–5.

55. Smith, *Origins*, 146–8.

56. On this score, one should also consult Smith, "When the Heavens Darkened: Yahweh, El, and the Divine Astral Family in Iron Age II Judah," in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palaestina* (eds W. G. Dever and S. Gitin; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 265–77.

57. The understanding that the divine realm above mirrors the mundane world below should not surprise anyone, as human beings only have the capacity to think in categories and ways they know. Language and, largely, all our conceptions for that matter, regarding the divine sphere have to be analogical and draw on our experiences and personal contexts.

58. Othmar Keel and Christopher Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel* (trans. T. H. Trapp; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

59. Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods,* 278.

C. Uehlinger later recanted, admitting he no longer holds this position.[60] Instead, he now seems to affirm the place of the divine couple in the pantheon.[61]

1.3 Pre- or Post-Monarchic Amalgamation

The stand of scholars such as Judith Hadley in regard to the pantheon is difficult to identify.[62] The way scholars understand Yahweh's ascendancy in Israel and Judah follows as a natural corollary of their individual stance on the emergence of monotheism. Since followers of the early-monotheistic paradigm refer to syncretistic practices to explain the evidence of polytheism, Yahweh did not have to appropriate other gods' domains. After the introduction of other gods besides himself, he remained the head of the pantheon. Having said that, proponents of the early monotheism model do not necessarily deny that Yahweh appropriated other deities' domains. Miller postulates a process which involved "a radical centralization or integration of divine power in one deity."[63] Frymer-Kensky contends that God had to "expand to include all the functions previously encompassed by an entire pantheon," but she does not articulate when and how this process occurred.[64] The main difference with the native pantheon model is that the absorption of the pantheon is imagined to have occurred earlier than the monarchy.[65] Both models, therefore, understand the need to allow some co-opting on the part of Yahweh. In the native pantheon model, Yahweh's amalgamation of other deities occurred on a grand scale, and later than the monarchy.

One of the lenses used by the biblical authors to see the process of the appropriation of the roles and traits of other native deities in Israel and Judah on the part of Yahweh is the larger focus of the present work. Consequently, the next order of business is to examine briefly the particular views of selected authors on Yahweh's appropriation of the traits of other native Israelite-Judahite deities as part of the process of emerging monotheism. It should be noted that, for the most part, these

60. For the recantation of his original position on Asherah, see Christoph Uehlinger, "Anthropomorphic Cult Statuary in Iron Age Palestine and the Search for Yahweh's Cult Images," in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (CBET 21; ed. K. Van der Toorn; Louvain: Peeters, 1997), 140–2.

61. Uehlinger, "Anthropomorphic Cult Statuary", 139–49.

62. Judith M. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah: Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Judith M. Hadley, "Yahweh and 'His Asherah': Archaeological and Textual Evidence for the Cult of the Goddess," in *Ein Gott allein?* (eds W. Dietrich and A. Klopfenstein; Fribourg: University Press, 1994), 235–68.

63. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., "Cosmology and World Order in the Old Testament: The Divine Council as Cosmic-Political Symbol," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 9 (1987): 56.

64. Frymer-Kensky, *Wake*, 83–99.

65. Green, *Storm-God*, 274–5.

amount to little more than a passing mention that such a process occurred. No systematic examination has been undertaken on this specific subject.

The appropriation or transfer of traits from one god to another was the rule within polytheistic systems. With the fluidity that characterizes polytheism, gods were frequently merged – or they were equated.[66]

1.4 Convergence and Differentiation

Smith combines convergence and differentiation into a heuristic model to explain the triumph of Yahwistic monotheism.[67] Convergence is basically Yahweh's taking over characteristics and traditions that belonged to other divinities; it is the coalescence of traits into Yahweh.[68] Smith notes that polemics played a role in the process of convergence. The presence of polemics shows that Yahweh embodied the traits of the very deities that are condemned.[69] Smith does not elaborate on this point, but it is applied in Chapter 5 to identify the appropriation of Baal's domain through outrightly polemical texts. Differentiation, by contrast, involves the rejection of some of Yahweh's traits which were deemed Canaanite. It distinguishes Yahwism over and against the gods of the neighboring countries.

Smith's model accounts for Yahweh's appropriation of other deities' domains for the emergence of monotheistic Yahwism. His model is useful, but his historical reconstruction of the rise of the monotheism process is not without problems. First, he views convergence as being operative in the early stages of Israel's history, in the so-called period of the Judges and the early monarchy, not unlike some proponents of early-monotheistic Yahwism (§1.3). Second, Smith understands monotheism to have arisen towards the end of the monarchy or the beginning of the Exile. These two points reflect a conservative approach characterized by a certain confidence in the historical reliability of biblical texts.

66. See W. G. Lambert, "The Historical Development of the Mesopotamian Pantheon: A Study in Sophisticated Polytheism," in *Unity & Diversity: Essays in the History, Literature, and Religion of the Ancient Near East* (eds H. Goedicke and J. J. M. Roberts; Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 193; Albright, *Archaeology*, 71; Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Frymer-Kensky, *Wake*, 86; Lemche, *Ancient Israel*, 228; Mark S. Smith, *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* (FAT 57; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

67. Smith, *Early History*, 7 n.12 footnotes B. Halpern in regards to convergence and he refers to Cross in relation to differentiation.

68. Smith, *Early History*, 7–9. On page 58, Smith writes, "The convergence of titles and imagery of deities to the personage of Yahweh appears to have been part of a wider religious development of conflation of religious motifs in Israelite tradition." See also Smith, *Memoirs of God*, 151.

69. Smith, *Early History*, 9.

Taken as faithful accounts of the events they mention, biblical texts such as the account of the so-called "reforms" of Hezekiah and Josiah in 2 Kings are dated as early as possible as their reliability diminishes with the distance that separates their production from the events they narrate.[70] Then, the problem of the lack of extra-biblical sources becomes intractable for the period of the Judges and of the early monarchy. Smith's postulate of a monolatrous faith in the first half of the monarchy is thus an argument based on silence and it fits the early-monotheistic Yahwism paradigm perfectly.[71] Hence, Smith's notion of convergence may be an attempt to harmonize the native pantheon model with the early-monotheistic model.

Despite these caveats, the conceptual framework set out by Smith is helpful. Convergence explains how Baal traits were appropriated for Yahweh while differentiation occurred when certain religious practices were condemned as foreign and thus inappropriate. Smith's model can be helpful provided it is freed from its presuppositions relative to the date of biblical texts, so that convergence could take place later than Smith surmises, at a time when it better fits the historical context.

The appropriation of the domains of other gods was probably a lengthy process, but it is usually treated in one sentence by scholars noting that Yahweh usurped, appropriated, took over, absorbed or merged with other divinities.[72] Ronald Hendel is hardly more explicit:

> Yahweh replaces or absorbs the functions of the major gods of the pantheon; hence, like El, he is the beneficent patriarch and judge; like Baal he is the Divine Warrior; and, like Asherah and her daughters, he dispenses the "blessings of the breasts and the womb" (Gen. 49.25). In these respects Israelite religion is a transformation of its West Semitic forebears.[73]

Hendel seems to understand that the process of Yahweh's usurpation or absorption of other gods started well before the Persian era, as he attributes a "more thoroughgoing monotheism, which denies the existence of other gods" to the prophetic and Deuteronomistic critique which he dates during the eighth through the sixth centuries BCE.

70. See J. Pakkala, "Why the Cult Reforms in Judah Probably did not Happen," in *One God–One Cult–One Nation* (eds R. G. Kratz and H. Spieckermann; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 201–37.

71. Smith, *Early History*, 187.

72. On the use of the term "merge" as it pertains to Yahweh and El, see Lang, *Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority,* 23. For the use of the term "usurped" to describe Yahweh's taking over the characteristics of the vegetation god, and that Yahweh "combines" features that were assigned to Baal and El, see Lemche, *Ancient Israel*, 228–9. Niehr, "Rise of YHWH," 71 argues that Yahweh "attracted traits of the sun god."

73. Ronald Hendel, "Israelite Religion," in *The HarperCollins Study Bible, Revised Edition* (ed. H. W. Attridge; New York: HarperCollins, 2006), xlv.

Gnuse postulates a process in two phases: "One could say that Yahweh was absorbed into the West-Semitic pantheon of Palestine and ultimately absorbed all the deities in a process of gradual 'convergence.'"[74]

Most often, the collapse of the pantheon, which logically means that Yahweh assumed the roles of other gods, is presumed, and the whole process is worthy only of a sentence. Therefore, there is a need to delve further into the process of this takeover or accrual on the part of Yahweh. This is the focus of Chapters 5 and 6 where texts relative to the appropriation of Baal's domain are examined, with some attention devoted also to Asherah and El. To lay the ground for the identification of such texts, Chapter 4 summarizes the particular domains of El, Baal and Asherah as they are delineated at Ugarit. Before that, Chapter 3 presents a model to classify texts dealing with the appropriation on the part of Yahweh, while Chapter 2 begins with biblical and archaeological evidence for the native pantheon model. Finally, Chapter 7 articulates the results into a new historical construction of the emergence of strict monotheistic Yahwism which goes beyond the opposition between the early-monotheistic model and the native pantheon model.

74. Gnuse, *No Other Gods* 197.

Chapter 2

Textual and Artefactual Evidence for a Native Pantheon

To understand the typology of biblical texts dealing with the appropriation of other gods presented in Chapter 3, it must first be demonstrated that the inhabitants of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah conceived of Yahweh as the head of the pantheon they venerated. The size of this pantheon was small compared with the pantheon of Egypt and Mesopotamia, but Yahweh was nevertheless not alone.

2.1 The Biblical Evidence for an Early Pantheon

The Hebrew Bible presents a strong case for a pantheon headed by Yahweh and his consort Asherah. The name of "Baal" also appears numerous times, and the anti-Baal polemics are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. The present chapter focuses first on mentions of other gods and then on the paredra.

2.1.1 Hezekiah's Reform

Besides Asherah, the alleged reforms of Hezekiah in 2 Kgs 23.4–13 lists other members of the pantheon in the temple: Baal, the host of heaven, the sun, the moon, the constellations. For good measure, the utter depravity of the people is further illustrated with religious practices supposedly borrowed from the neighboring regions: the Topheth, Molech, the horses and chariot of the sun, Astarte of the Sidonians, Chemosh of Moab, Milcom of the Ammonites. The polemical tone of the passage is conducive to rhetorical exaggeration, and need not be taken as a true reflection of the actual religious atmosphere in late monarchic Jerusalem. Yet, the Hebrew Bible can hardly be more explicit in asserting that the religion of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah cannot be termed monotheistic. The very source used to argue that a monotheistic Yahwism existed for ancient Israel and Judah insists that a multitude of deities were venerated in Judah besides Yahweh and Asherah in order to build its case for monotheism. While it is true that it implies that Yahwistic monotheism represents a return to Moses' unadulterated religion, the Exodus cycle is never depicted as a golden monotheistic age. Moses is ever

battling against the people's attraction to "other" gods, even accusing his own brother of religious misconduct. Golden was the Calf, not the days of the Exodus.

Turning back to 2 Kings 23, despite the exaggerations intrinsic to prophetic fulminations against the other gods, it is iconism, presented as isolated rampageous episodes of little consequence, rather than polytheism, that bears the brunt of Hezekiah's and Josiah's reforms.

As the aim of the writers in the Book of Kings was to explain the similar fates of the two kingdoms, they put monotheism and aniconism in the same list of accusations.[1] The Chronicler, however, did not correlate Judahite kings with their northern counterparts, and the reforms in 2 Chron. 29–31 temper evidence for a pantheon in the Kingdom of Judah. The different ideological agendas in Kings and in Chronicles dictate different depictions of the religious scenes in Israel and Judah, which excludes these texts as primary sources for the history of Israelite and Judean religions. As secondary sources, their polytheistic portrayals cannot be ignored, as they cohere with depictions of Israelite and Judaen religion in other biblical passages.

2.1.2 Yahweh Sabaoth

Besides the widespread invectives against the worship of the Baals and of the Asherahs, the frequent use of the term "Yahweh Sabaoth" to designate the head god of Israel and Judah presupposes a pantheon.[2] Yahweh of Hosts led armies (*Sabaoth*) of heavenly soldiers, since the term "Sabaoth" is found besides references to the divine council:

> Who in the clouds ranks like Yahweh? Who among the sons of gods is like Yahweh, a God feared in the council of the holy ones, great and awesome above all that are around him? Yahweh *God of hosts*, who is as mighty as Yah? (Ps. 89.7–9 [Eng. 6–8])

The heavenly host was the original referent for the pantheon. The Hebrew Bible stresses Yahweh's primacy, while recognizing the occurrence of other gods. For instance, Micaiah's vision in 1 Kgs 22.19 depicts Yahweh "sitting on his throne, with all the host of heaven standing beside him to the right and to the left of him." The presence of these other gods is necessary to uphold Yahweh's supremacy. Before Yahweh could be conceived of as alone, he first had to be viewed as the greatest. Hence the Hebrew Bible is riddled with polytheistic presuppositions.[3]

The sheer quantity of further texts in favor of a native pantheon in the Hebrew Bible precludes a comprehensive presentation. Unproblematic hints that

1. Brian B. Schmidt, "The Aniconic Tradition: On Reading Images and Viewing Texts," in *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to 'Judaisms* (ed. D. V. Edelman; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 75–105 (75).

2. See Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, "Yahweh Zebaoth," *DDD,* 923.

3. For instance Gen. 1.26; 3.22; Exod. 15.11; Deut. 32.8–9; Job 1.6; 2.1; Ps. 82; Jer. 23.18 and Zech. 14.5.

presuppose a heavenly realm populated by several or many deities can be found in the expression "God of gods" (Ps. 136.2–3). Even the expression "our god" in the charter of biblical monotheism, the *Shema Israel,* admits that other gods exist for other peoples. It insists that Yahweh is Israel's only god, without negating the existence of other divinities for Israel's neighbors. The occurrence of other gods is necessary, or the point made in Judg. 11.24 would fail. Addressing the Ammonite king, Jephthah asks: "Should you not possess what your god Chemosh gives you to possess? And should we not be the ones to possess everything that the Yahweh our god has conquered for our benefit?" Jephthah's understanding of monotheism implies that each kingdom venerates its own god. Monotheism in this case applies only to the level of individual kingdoms. As this view is reflected in the non-corrected version of Deut. 32.9 (see below §2.1.3), the writer does not present Jephthah as a less than orthodox follower of Mosaic monotheism, though Jephthah belongs to the ambiguous figures of the Book of Judges.[4] This kind of territorial monotheism is deemed normative or at least sufficient to justify Israel's presence in Canaan. That this kind of territorial monotheism clashes with universal monotheism is not considered problematic. At most, Jephthah is conceived of as a proponent of a form of monotheism which became obsolete when Yahweh told Moses that the god El Shaddai who appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was in fact Yahweh himself (Exod. 6.3). In this case, however, Moses seems to have forgotten the secret knowledge he received in Egypt when, years later, he recited Deuteronomy 32. Or, by stating that Deuteronomy 32 is a song (Deut. 31.30), the writer established a distinction between Mosaic monotheism and an older form of monotheism, which was still transmitted in this traditional song.[5]

It may seem odd to modern readers to have Moses close his long theological testament with a traditional song which reiterated a form of monotheism which Moses' Torah presents as too narrow. Ancient writers, however, held tradition in greater awe than we do. Rather than erasing previous traditions novelty added to them. Yahweh had to become "our god" before he could become the god of the others and eliminate those other gods. Before erasing Chemosh altogether, Israel used him to justify his place in Canaan, and then placed him in Yahweh's retinue to confirm the primacy of Yahweh Sebaoth.

4. Whether or not Jephthah "got his facts right" is discussed by Lillian R. Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges* (JSOTS, 68; Sheffield: Almond, 1988), 89. See also Robert H. O'Connell, *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges* (SVT, 63; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 198–200.

5. For a recent discussion of the dependence of Jephthah's argument with the Ammonite king with Numbers 20–2, see Dieter Böhler, *Jiftach und die Tora. Eine intertextuelle Auslegung von Ri 10,6–12,7* (Österreichische biblische Studien 34: Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008), 260–3. Böhler makes no mention of Deuteronomy 32.9.

2.1.3 Greater But Not Alone

When Exodus 18.11 claims that Yahweh is greater than all the gods (גדול יהוה מכל האלהים), it also implies the presence of these other deities besides Yahweh. The same applies to the claim that all gods bow down before Yahweh in Psalms 97.7. While the Hebrew grammar, especially in poetic contexts, cannot be evoked to assert that this statement envisages that the supremacy of Yahweh will be recognized in heaven in the future, Zech. 14.9 clearly understands that "Yahweh will be one" only on the day when "Yahweh will become king over all the earth." As part of a prophetic oracle, the expression "on that day" (ביום ההוא) looks forward to a future accomplishment and the verb יהיה (he will become) is an unaccomplished form. Therefore, Zechariah 14 supports the view of an evolutionary process in which monotheism gradually evolved towards an understanding of Yahweh as a universalistic monotheism.

2.1.4 The Sons of God

The presence of divine entities besides Yahweh is presupposed in two vignettes mentioning sons of God. Some anonymous sons of God (בני האלהים) mate with the daughters of humans in Genesis 6.1–4. Sons of El (בני אל) appear in Deut. 32.8–9. Elyon, the supreme god, set up the boundaries of the people according to the number of the sons of El. As the people of Yahweh, Jacob received his own share in the distribution of land. Following the model of periodic distribution of land lots, the supreme god divides up his estate according to the number of his sons, each one being the god of a particular people, who is thus assigned to a particular territory.[6] Yahweh is thus one of the sons of Elyon, as Jacob-Israel is one of the people residing in a portion of Elyon's estate. This concept was deemed problematic only by the Hellenistic translators of the Hebrew Bible (see below § 5.7).

2.1.5 Let Us Make!

The plural forms used for Elohim's creative activity in Genesis 1.26a lean toward the native pantheon approach. Although Elohim is synonymous with Yahweh in the final form of the Hebrew Bible, the phrase, "Let *us* make (נעשׂה) humankind in *our* image (בצלמנו), according to *our* likeness (כדמותנו)," originally reflected the divine council or the mythology of the divine couple. Likeness to the divine includes the creation of humankind as a male and a female (verse 27). The divine as being male and female would reflect vestigial Asherah mythology where the consort has not been thoroughly excised from the text. The personification of Lady Wisdom in Prov. 3.13–18 has long been thought to have a connection with Asherah. When the pantheon collapsed, it was necessary to interpret these texts

6. On the concept of land distribution, see Philippe Guillaume, *Land, Credit and Crisis. Agrarian Finance in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2012), 47.

as representing wisdom personified rather than a goddess. This shift in understanding was necessary to be consistent with later monotheism. Nevertheless, a feminine dimension for Yahweh should stand out as a clue that Yahweh has appropriated the domain of his former consort, Asherah.[7] Whether the third person plural suffixes in Genesis 1 signify Asherah in conjunction with God/Yahweh, or denotes the divine council, either way they reflect a plurality of gods.

2.1.6 The Woman in the Ephah

As part of the scathing invectives against the worship of deities alongside Yahweh, one finds a polemic against Asherah, which, by its very presence, presupposes her veneration, and displays the problem she posed in the mind of the writers if not in their social surroundings. Zechariah's vision of an *ephah* with a woman inside it (Zech. 5.5–11) addresses the worship of Asherah by way of clues.

The woman inside the *ephah* is identified through a pseudo anagram of the name Asherah (אשרה) turned into "wickedness" (רשעה).[8] Furthermore, the ephah in which the wicked Asherah sits becomes a coffin, in which she is enclosed alive. Sealed with a leaden cover, the coffin is sent away to the distant land of Shinar, which is Babylon.[9] By her death and banishment, this text solidifies Yahweh's complete appropriation of Asherah's domain.

As this text cannot be earlier than the Persian period (the book's superscription placing Zechariah in that era), the occurrence of an ideological struggle implying that Asherah no longer exists indicates that strict monotheism did not arise before the Persian period. If no one had rendered a cult to Asherah in the Persian era, the polemic would have been unnecessary.

2.1.7 The Queen of Heaven

What constituted normality with regard to religious beliefs, as far as the inhabitants of Judah were concerned, may be seen in a response to Jeremiah from Judean refugees in Egypt during the Neo-Babylonian period:

> Then all the men who were aware that their wives had been making offerings

7. But see Smith, *Early History*, 147: "Female language for Yahweh could have stemmed from the flexibility of divine language."

8. A pseudo anagram since aleph and ayin are different letters and cannot be equated.

9. Diana V. Edelman, "Proving Yahweh Killed His Wife (Zechariah 5:5–11)," *BibInt* 11 (2003): 335–44. Ben C. Ollenburger, *Zechariah* (New Interpreters Bible VII; Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 779 understands the woman as a representation of an unspecific female deity. For the identification of the woman as the Queen of Heaven see Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (WBC 32; Waco: Word Books, 1984), 210. W. Sibley Towner, "Zachariah," in *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (ed. Wayne A. Meeks; London: HarperCollins, 1993), 1417 contends that the woman represents the personification of Israel's sin, an argument countered by the anagram.

> to other gods, and all the women who stood by, a great assembly, all the people who lived in Pathros in the land of Egypt, answered Jeremiah: "As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of Yahweh, we are not going to listen to you. Instead, we will do everything that we have vowed, make offerings to the queen of heaven and pour out libations to her, just as we and our ancestors, our kings and our officials, used to do in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. We used to have plenty of food, and prospered, and saw no misfortune. But from the time we stopped making offerings to the queen of heaven and pouring out libations to her, we have lacked everything and have perished by the sword and by famine." (Jer. 44.15–19)

The queen of heaven was a hybrid of two different goddesses, probably Astarte and Ishtar.[10] According to the protagonists in this text, the cessation of her veneration was the cause of their present predicament.[11]

While Jeremiah 44 considers the worship of any other deity besides Yahweh as inappropriate, it does not actually exclude the possibility that the goddess to whom the women made offerings was worshipped alongside Yahweh, and not instead of Yahweh.

2.1.8 The Rarity of Strictly Monotheistic Texts

It has been argued that monotheistic texts are embedded in texts that are demonstrably late.[12] Juha Pakkala lists only six deuteronomistic passages (Deut. 4.32–40; 7.7–11; 2 Sam. 7.22–29; 1 Kgs 8.54–61; 18.21–40 and 2 Kgs 19.15–19) which use monotheistic language, noting that these texts "often digress from the context and its themes so that their removal would not disturb its general flow, and in most cases, would make it clearer."[13]

Whatever the date of these texts, it is fairly clear that they were inserted in contexts of which the original concern was not monotheism. Or, the passages in which the affirmations of strict monotheism are found were composed at the

10. For the Queen of Heaven representing a syncretism between Astarte and Ishtar as early as the end of the second millennium BCE, see Susan Ackerman, "'And the Women Knead Dough": The Worship of the Queen of Heaven in Sixth-Century Judah," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel* (ed. P. L. Day; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 109–24. More on the Queen of Heaven in M. Weinfeld, "The Worship of Molech and the Queen of Heaven and its Background," *UF* 4 (1972): 133–54.

11. Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, "Judah under Assyrian Hegemony: A Reexamination of Imperialism and Religion," *JBL* 112 (1993): 412.

12. Smith, *Origins*, 150 argues that monotheistic texts do not predate the seventh century BCE. Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 174 claims that "Most of the Deuteronomistic texts that reveal a clear monotheistic conception are limited to the book of Deuteronomy."

13. Juha Pakkala, "The Monotheism of the Deuteronomistic History," *SJOT* 21 (2007): 159–78 (163).

same time as the monotheistic notes, given that biblical writers frequently created dialectical tensions and juxtaposed competing stances on ideological debates in order to critique one and advance its alternative.[14] In any case, the Hebrew Bible evidences remarkably few texts that can be termed monotheistic in the modern sense. In the Hebrew Bible, monotheism does not exclude other gods besides Yahweh.

Compared with the sprinkling of monotheistic passages in Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets, the collection designated as Second Isaiah provides a more solid corpus of monotheistic affirmations. Yet, the hyperbolic speech which extols a divinity as the only one occurs in the ancient Near East in contexts where all would have understood that such statements do not literally mean they are actually the only god in the entire divine realm. Rather, it was a way of uplifting and praising a particular god, while avoiding aggravating the others by claiming that they did not exist. Thus, these seemingly monotheistic comments in the ancient world do not necessarily mean that the authors of these texts denied the existence of other gods.[15] If the abundance of monotheistic statements in a small corpus such as Second Isaiah does provide evidence of the emergence of monotheism, its fierce censure of statues as being worthless and inanimate objects points to iconism rather than polytheism as the main concern of the writers.

It is to Psalm 96 that one must turn to find a more pointed affirmation of Yahweh's uniqueness: "For great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but Yahweh made the heavens." (Ps. 96.4–5)

There, the onslaught against idols is complete with a clear statement that the other gods are no gods. The claim that Yahweh is the only god has to be backed up by the claim that he created the heavens. This massive theological claim was a novelty. To pave the way for its acceptance, verse 4 begins with the less contentious affirmation of Yahweh's greatness among his divine equals. Hence, it is clear that the strict monotheistic stance proceeded from the affirmation of Yahweh's primacy rather than from an appeal to a strict monotheism anchored in a mythological Mosaic past. The juxtaposition of both standpoints in the same text reveals the existence of an ideological struggle revolving around Yahweh's status.[16] That his primacy is not simply dismissed as invalid indicates that some literati resisted strict monotheism and considered it illegitimate.

14. James Anderson, "Creating Dialectical Tensions: Religious Developments in Persian Period Yehud Reflected in Biblical Texts," in *Religion in the Persian Period: Emerging Judaisms and other Trends* (eds D. V. Edelman and A. Fitzpatrick: Orientalische Religionen in der Antike; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming).

15. These points arose during a discussion following a paper by Larry Hurtado, "What Comprises Jewish Monotheism in the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman Period?" at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta, November 22, 2010 in the Unity and Diversity in Early Jewish Monotheisms Consultation Section.

16. Yairah Amit, *Hidden Polemics in Biblical Narrative* (trans. by J. Chipman; Biblical Interpretation Series 25; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 28–30.

In light of what has been said in the biblical passages discussed in this section, the early-monotheistic Yahwism model is crumbling under the weight of evidence. The enquiry continues with non-biblical evidence.

2.2 Artifactual Evidence

A century of intensive archaeological excavations in the Middle East has yielded significant finds relative to the rise of monotheism.

2.2.1 Kuntillet Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom

Kuntillet Ajrud in the Sinai Peninsula and Khirbet el-Qom in the Judean Shephelah have yielded inscriptions that juxtapose Asherah with Yahweh. Palaeographic analysis dates these inscriptions to the eighth century BCE.[17] From Kuntillet Ajrud, inscriptions on a pithos and on a wall present four different occurrences of Yahweh and Asherah. One of these reads, "For/to Yahweh (of) Teiman and to Asheratah."[18] El and Baal are also invoked in a poetic text found at this site.

West of Hebron, a memorial inscription was found in a burial cave at Khirbet el-Qom.[19] Although decipherment has proved tricky, one can extrapolate from the rock that Asherah is mentioned three times alongside Yahweh. Although many attempt to argue that Asherah is merely a sacred pole in these texts, as well as in the Bible, one must wonder whether this argument is not grounded in a desire to maintain an early-monotheistic Yahwism paradigm.[20] These arguments do not work in all cases and are also not always compelling, as some occurrences of Asherah in the Hebrew Bible cannot be understood as signifying a sacred pole (see §4.3.1). Some have suggested that the term could signify a cultic site, but this is not sustainable either.[21] Scholarly interpretations of these inscriptions are sometimes driven by one's religious convictions. How to understand the attestations of the expression "his Asherah" (אשרתה) in relation to Yahweh has been the focal point in the debate.

The logical understanding that views these inscriptions as attesting to Yahweh and "his Asherah" is frequently objected to by arguing that pronominal suffixes are

17. Zevit, *Religions of Ancient Israel*, 359–405.

18. Zevit, *Religions of Ancient Israel*, 398, inscription 8.

19. William G. Dever, "Qom, Khirbet El," *NEAEHL* 4: 1233–5.

20. On Asherah as a sacred pole, see McCarter, "Religious Reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah," 57–80; P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., "Aspects of the Religion of the Israelite Monarchy: Biblical and Epigraphic Data," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (eds P. Miller et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 149; Lemaire, *Birth of Monotheism,* 60–1; Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 51–2, 227. Although Day contends that these inscriptions only refer to a cult object rather than a goddess, on pp. 60 and 227 he concedes that the cult object symbolized Asherah.

21. See Zevit, *Religions of Ancient Israel*, 400–2.

not attested on the end of proper names in Biblical Hebrew. Inscriptions are not necessarily written in Biblical Hebrew so this does not preclude the possibility of the existence of such suffixes. Biblical Hebrew might well be a somewhat artificial language created later specifically to transmit the literature that now forms the Hebrew Bible; thus, it would have established particular conventions that marked it out from ordinary speech, to which the corpus of inscriptions is likely to bear closer affinities. Regardless of how one translates the term אשרתה, all interpretations in some way or other point towards the goddess. Even when Asherah is understood as a sacred pole, that pole is accepted as an object used in the cult of the goddess Asherah. The discovery of the Ugaritic text where Asherah holds a prominent position as El's consort has considerably weakened the sacred pole interpretation, granting much weight to the belief that the Asherah mentioned at Kuntillet Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom is Yahweh's paredra even if her presence was signified by a cultic symbol.

Some proponents of the early-monotheistic Yahwism model do not concede that these inscriptions provide evidence of a goddess,[22] but most interpret these finds as syncretism or reflections of popular religion.[23] On the contrary, the supporters of the native pantheon paradigm view the presence of Asherah besides Yahweh as the norm prevailing in Israel and Judah.

As a caravanserai with a shrine, it is probable that Kuntillet Ajrud was supported by funds provided by the Israelite monarchy.[24] The reference there to Yahweh of Shomron (Hebrew for "Samaria") supports the notion of a direct involvement of the Israelite monarchy at the site, which in turn renders a categorization as popular religion doubtful. However, the analysis of pottery at the site reveals that some of it was manufactured in the vicinity of Jerusalem, which adds ties of the site to Judah.[25] It is thus naïve always to classify the worship of Asherah as popular religion in contradistinction to official religion.

2.2.2 Arad

The temple at Arad presents another thorn in the flesh for the adherents of the early-monotheistic Yahwism paradigm. The construction and destruction of this southern sanctuary in Judah remains a hotly-contested issue. Yohanan Aharoni, after revising his initial conclusion, proposed that the temple was built in the ninth century BCE. Having reviewed the evidence, Herzog argues its construction

22. McCarter, "Reforms," 76; Lemaire, *Birth of Monotheism*, 60; Miller, *Religion of Ancient Israel*, 31–6.

23. So, for example, Maier, *Asherah*, 169; Korpel, "Asherah Outside Israel," 147.

24. Zeev Meshel, "Teman, Horvat," *NEAEHL* 4: 1458–64; Zeev Meshel, "Two Aspects in the Excavation of Kuntillet 'Ağrud," in *Ein Gott allein?* (eds W. Dietrich and A. Klopfenstein; Fribourg: University Press, 1994), 99–104.

25. Zevit, *Religions of Ancient Israel*, 376; Nadav Na'aman and Nurit Lissovsky, "Kuntillet 'Ajrud, Sacred Trees and the Asherah," *Tel Aviv* 35 (2008): 199.

occurred in the mid-eighth century.[26] The major point of contention revolves around why and when the sanctuary was destroyed, whether this occurred under the purported reforms of King Hezekiah or not. The site is of importance for the present discussion because of what was found in the niche. Three standing stones and two incense altars were found lying on their sides on the steps that led into the niche. Two of the stones leaned against the back wall and were plastered over along with the two incense altars.[27] The third stone was found atop a square, raised platform in the right-rear corner of the niche. This suggests that, at an early phase at this Judahite site, at least two deities were venerated in the ninth century stratum XI. Their standing-stones were subsequently plastered over.[28] At a later phase, one stone was present without an incense altar. Zevit suggests that, besides Arad and the temple in Jerusalem, two deities, Yahweh and Asherah, were venerated at Dan, Hazor, Lachish and Megiddo.[29] Ahlström envisioned a triad of Yahweh, Asherah and Baal at Arad because of the three recovered stelae.[30] The evidence from this site is treated in the same manner as Kuntillet Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom by representatives of both paradigms: syncretism/popular religion versus native/official religion. The argument that this represents a form of popular religion is weak, as this is clearly part of state-sponsored religion. The temple was part of a large fortress, an element of state mechanism. To call this syncretism in order to maintain the existence of a hypothetical pure monotheism, one must provide an answer as to why one should not then view the Yahwism of royal Israel and Judah as syncretistic, which would lead to agreeing with the original pantheon model. The original monotheism would have to be pushed back into pre-monarchic times, for which there is no documentation. It thus becomes a matter of belief undisturbed by contrary evidence, but also lacking any supporting evidence.

2.2.3 Elephantine

The community of Judeans at Elephantine in Upper Egypt left Aramaic papyri dating to the fifth century BCE.[31] These texts reveal that this garrison venerated several deities at a late date. In the framework of the native pantheon paradigm, the Elephantine pantheon represents the continuation of religious ideations

26. Z. Herzog, "The Date of the Temple at Arad: Reassessment of the Stratigraphy and the Implications for the History of Religion in Judah," in *Studies in the Archaeology of the Iron Age in Israel and Jordan* (ed. A. Mazar; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 156–78; Diana V. Edelman, "Hezekiah's Alleged Cultic Centralization," *JSOT* 32 (2008): 395–434.

27. Zevit, *Religions of Ancient Israel*, 166–7.

28. On standing stones represented deities see Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1995).

29. Zevit, *Religions of Ancient Israel*, 652–4.

30. Ahlström, *History of Ancient Palestine*, 524.

31. For these texts, see A. E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (ed. with trans. and notes by A. E. Cowley; Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2005).

which were current in the Israelite or Judahite kingdoms. The deities worshipped at Elephantine were Yahu, Anat-Yahu, Bethel, Anat-Bethel, Eshem, Eshem-Bethel, Herem and Herem-Bethel.[32] The significance of the absence of Asherah is discussed in Chapter 7.

According to the champions of the early-monotheistic paradigm, the references to these other deities at Elephantine represent a syncretism of hypostatized aspects of Yahweh with paganizing Canaano-Aramaean influences. Albright wrote "it is clear that pagan theological conceptions had entered into post-exilic Jewry through the circles to which these Jews belonged."[33] Albright termed the religion of the Jewish colony at Elephantine, "Yahwistic syncretism."[34]

The notion of syncretism is validated by the Phoenician connections of the god Eshem and the Aramean connections of the gods Herem and Bethel as well as the presence of a contingent of Aramean soldiers in the fort at Syene on the opposite eastern bank of the Nile, some of whom owned land in Elephantine. This would explain why Aramean deities were honored in this temple. Yet, the notion of syncretism presupposes the existence of an earlier norm from which the Elephantine Jews deviated. Since there is no evidence that the Jewish community at Elephantine knew the Torah, and through it the notion that the worship of Yahweh excludes the worship of other gods, it is more legitimate to view the Yahwism of Elephantine as traditional Israelite religion that predated the instauration of strict monotheism.

2.2.4 Figurines

The current consensus is that the hundreds of female figurines found in Israel and Judah are in some way representative of the veneration of the goddess Asherah. Although such figurines are not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, and extra-biblical texts do not help correlate their actual usage, the domestic and funerary settings in which they are usually found suggest an association with the goddess in relation to childbirth and child rearing, typically the domain of a goddess.[35]

32. See Bezalel Porten, *Archives from Elephantine: The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1968), 173–9; Bezalel Porten, *The Elephantine Papyri in English: Three Millennia of Cross-Cultural Continuity and Change* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); see also, James D. Purvis, "Exile and Return: From the Babylonian Destruction to the Reconstruction of the Jewish State," in *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple* (ed. Hershel Shanks; Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice, 1999), 215; Karel van der Toorn, "Anat-Yahu, Some Other Deities, and the Jews of Elephantine," *Numen* 39 (1992): 80–101.

33. Albright, *Stone Age*, 373.

34. Albright, *Archaeology*, 168.

35. See R. Kletter, "Asherah and the Judean Pillar Figurines Engendered?" in *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the 47th Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Helsinki, July 2–6, 2001* (Part 1; eds S. Parpola and R. M. Whiting; The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project: Helsinki, 2002), 289–300.

The preponderance of these figures in Iron Age Judah compared with the preponderance of so-called Astarte plaques in the Bronze Age displays their association with Asherah, as she too gained a position of prominence in Iron Age Judah, though she really began to do so in the Late Bronze Age, as Ugarit shows.[36]

2.2.5 Taanach Cultic Stand

The Taanach cult stand dates to circa the tenth century BCE. It also provides evidence for the veneration of Asherah and of several deities, but not necessarily in Israel, as Taanach was probably not in the Israelite orbit in the tenth century.[37] The stand displays four fenestrated tiers each displaying different motifs. From the top down, one sees a winged sun disk sitting atop what appears to be a calf, two lions with a tree in the centre, two sphinxes or cherubim with an empty space between them and a naked lady between two lions. The top and second levels when counting from the bottom up are considered as references to Yahweh, and the remaining two represent Asherah.[38] At the very least, two deities are attested. If the winged disk and cherubim stand for Yahweh, the representation of his presence with an empty space is aniconic, which would support an Israelite influence. The interpretation of the lions flanking a tree and a naked lady as references to Asherah is straightforward thanks to parallels on seals.[39]

2.2.6 Assyria

Two pieces of evidence from Assyria add credibility to the native pantheon position. In describing the conquest of Samaria by the king of Assyria, the Akkadian Nimrud prism of Sargon II states: "and the gods of their confidence as spoil I counted."[40] Although this is a stock phrase in royal propaganda which assumes the presence of a pantheon in every neighboring country, in light of earlier evidence it seems to be another clue pointing towards a pantheon in Israel.

36. Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 97–108 and 325–41.

37. On the cultic stand, see Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 154–60; for its discovery, see Paul W. Lapp, "The 1968 Excavations at Tell Ta'annek," *BASOR* 195 (1969): 2–49 (42–44). Photographs of the stand in Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 321–4; Shanks, *Ancient Israel*, 123; William G. Dever, "A Temple Built for Two: Did Yahweh Share a Throne with His Consort Asherah?," *BAR* 34, no. 2 (March/April 2008): 60.

38. Hess, *Israelite Religions*, 321–4.

39. Another possible piece of evidence for the goddess has recently arisen, although it was discovered in the 1920s excavations of the Ophel in Jerusalem: see Garth Gilmour, "An Iron Age II Pictorial Inscription from Jerusalem Illustrating Yahweh and Asherah," *PEQ* 141 (2009): 87–103.

40. Bob Becking, "The God in whom they Trusted … Assyrian Evidence for Iconic Polytheism in Ancient Israel?" in *Only One God? Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah* (eds B. Becking and M. Dijkstra; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 153–5.

Bronze embossed bowls were found at the Assyrian site of Nimrud. They were probably taken as tribute from Judah sometime between the reigns of Tiglath-Pileser and the early part of Sargon II's reign (740–716 BCE).[41] Some of these bowls have Hebrew inscribed on them as well as iconographic representations of beetles, possibly a symbol of the Judahite monarchy.[42] Besides four-winged beetles, one bowl on display in Berlin has Asherah imagery in the form of a stylized tree on its outer rings. Flanking both sides of the tree, a winged serpent atop a pole takes a protective posture in relation to the tree. These pole-mounted winged serpents recall the Nehushtan that, according to 2 Kings 19.4, stood in the Temple of Jerusalem until Hezekiah destroyed it. A deer is drawing near to the tree, which is consistent with the common motif of the stylized tree-feeding ibex related to Asherah. If these bowls are indeed Judean, it is possible to conclude that "such symbolic representations of Nehushtan and Asherah were both perfectly acceptable in Judean Yahwism prior to Hezekiah's reforms."[43]

Whatever the historical reliability of Hezekiah's reforms, the uraeus and representation of Asherah, engraved on the bowls and mentioned in the Bible, present yet another piece of evidence for a pantheon in Judah. The only caveat arises from the possibility that the Hebrew inscribed on some of the bowls was added after they were found, so as to increase their value with a biblical connection. That the Hebrew inscriptions are a forgery remains a possibility, although the early date of the discovery, before the development of a thriving antiquity market, militates in favor of their authenticity.

2.2.7 Toponyms

None of the attested place-names in Israel or Judah bear a theophoric element derived from the name Yahweh. On the contrary, Baal is the most common theophoric element used in the naming of sites founded in Iron I in the Southern Levant. As discussed in Chapter 4, the term "baal" in toponyms may act as a common noun, just as the title "Lord" does when used as an alternative to the name Yahweh. Yet, it is equally likely that the deity Baal is intended. What is significant here is that toponyms present a reversal of the Iron Age onomastic evidence, which attests to Yahweh most frequently. The difference can be attributed to the conservative aspect of toponyms. Compared with personal names, place-names remain stable through centuries and even millennia, as is the case with many biblical sites in Israel/Palestine. Hence, toponyms in the Hebrew Scriptures mostly reflect Bronze Age realities, which explains why Baal is so frequent and Yahweh absent. Personal names, however, reflect Iron Age realities

41. R. D. Barnett, "Layard's Nimrud Bronzes and Their Inscriptions," *Eretz-Israel* 8 (1967): 1–7.

42. Y. Yadin, "A Note on the Nimrud Bronze Bowls," *Eretz-Israel* 8 (1967): 6.

43. J. J. M. Roberts and K. L Roberts, "Yahweh's Significant Other," in *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World* (eds L. Day and C. Pressler; Louisville: John Knox, 2006), 176–85 (183–4).

and the predominance of Yahweh-type names shows that he was the head deity of Israel and Judah. Besides Yahweh, one also finds *ym, mwt, rp', ʿnt, ʾmwn,ʾs* (= Isis), *bs* (= Bes), *ḥwr* (= Horus), *ssm* and *mr'*.[44] Hence, if Yahweh is foremost, he was not alone as Iron II anthroponyms reveal the existence of other gods. The presence of Egyptian deities in these instances is not only a product of Egyptian influence but a consequence of the fluidity and diversity operating within ancient polytheistic societies and worldviews.

2.3 Summary

The abundance of evidence for the worship of Asherah and other gods besides Yahweh indicates that the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were no different from their ancient Near Eastern neighbors, except in that their pantheon was rather small. The Iron Age epigraphic finds from Kuntillet Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom attest only the presence of a paredra besides Yahweh. The temple niche from Arad and pillar-base figurines hardly support the presence of other gods besides the Yahweh-Asherah couple. Only the Persian-period texts from Elephantine add Anat and Bethel to the pantheon headed by Yahweh.

The evidence for a small native pantheon in the kingdom of Judah, as in the kingdom of Israel, is so clear that it has been claimed that a statue of Asherah stood in Solomon's Temple for most of its existence.[45] The weaving for Asherah (2 Kgs 23.7), most likely to adorn her statue, is consistent with the phenomenon of clothing statues in the ancient Near East.[46] If this was indeed the case, the claim that Asherah was worshipped only by the uneducated populace has to be abandoned. Yahweh's paredra belonged to the "official" pantheon as much as to "popular" religiosity, and Yahweh's statue would also have been clothed.

Textual and artefactual evidence that does not cohere with the early-monotheistic Yahwism paradigm tends to be dismissed as syncretistic by the proponents of this model. The introduction of other gods is explained either as the result of the diplomatic ties of the Omride dynasty with the Phoenician kingdoms or as

44. Zevit, *Religions of Ancient Israel*, 648–9.

45. Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess* (3rd edn; Detroit, MI: Wayne State University, 1990), 50. Citing Patai, Johanna H. Stuckey, "The Great Goddesses of the Levant," *Journal of the Society for Study of Egyptian Antiquities* 30 (2003): 140 writes, "Indeed, a statue of Asherah stood in the Solomonic temple in Jerusalem for about two-thirds of its existence or for around 236 of its 370 years." She makes the point that Asherah did some appropriation of her own, as is common with deities in a pantheon. Anat and Astarte merged into Asherah.

46. On the clothing of the statue of Marduk before a festival see Jean Bottéro, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia* (trans. T. L. Fagan; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 153. Herbert Niehr, "Israelite Religion," 29 points out that in West Semitic religions one of the duties of priests was to clothe the statues of the gods.

popular religion.[47] The dismissive interpretations of the evidence as representative of syncretism or popular religion within the early-monotheistic Yahwism model appear motivated by religious suppositions. This model, that seeks to maintain that an early form of monotheism once existed, can no longer stand against the weight of evidence to the contrary.

Although both models acknowledge some amount of appropriation of other gods' traits and duties by Yahweh in order for monotheism to emerge, it is only the native pantheon position that views this as having occurred on a large scale before the old pantheon was merged into a single deity. For the adherents of the early-monotheistic Yahwism viewpoint, Yahweh's appropriation of divine traits held by other deities is in fact a re-appropriation of what was wrongfully attributed to other gods and was really always to be attributed to Yahweh. Whichever position is taken on this subject, Yahweh had to do some measure of appropriating that which was perceived to belong to other gods before the entire pantheon was fused into a single god, leaving only messenger-type entities besides the only god.

In the framework of the native pantheon model, the practices condemned in Deuteronomistic passages as foreign intrusions were in fact native practices. This model better fits the evidence than does early-monotheistic Yahwism. The same can be said about the notions of syncretism and popular religion that are evoked to explain the presence of gods other thanYahweh. Ironically, the early-monotheistic Yahwism position adopts the rhetoric of the later monotheistic biblical writers over evidence from the culture itself and the practices described in the Hebrew Bible.

The Hebrew Bible was formulated when monotheism was the norm. Strict monotheism was projected back onto the early days of Israel and Judah to pass off the novelty of strict monotheism as a venerable tradition.[48]

47. On popular religion, see J. Berlinerblau, "The 'Popular Religion' Paradigm in Old Testament Research: A Sociological Critique," *JSOT* 60 (1993): 3–26; repr. in *Social-Scientific Old Testament Criticism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 53–76; and Francesca Stavrakopoulou "'Popular' Religion and 'Official' Religion: Practice, Perception, Portrayal," in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah* (eds F. Stavrakopoulou and J. Barton; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 37–58.

48. For this reconstruction, see Anderson, "Creating Dialectical Tensions."

Chapter 3

Three Categories of Appropriation

Proponents of the native pantheon paradigm view the ultimate triumph of monotheism as the result of the appropriation of functions and attributes of other gods by Yahweh. Instead of being a return to the pure monotheism of the origin, it is a late development.

As the Hebrew Bible clearly states, Yahweh encountered competition regarding allegiance. The appropriation of the traits of the different deities in Israel, Judah and later Yehud was a requisite development for the emergence of monotheism, regardless of whether one understands the different deities to be foreign imports or native gods.

Once it is accepted that the inhabitants of Israel and Judah at all levels of society, as well as the majority of the population of the Persian province of Yehud, at least in its early days, conceived of their god as part of a pantheon, it is necessary to explain how the pantheon was turned into strict monotheism. The present chapter delineates a model articulating the different strategies used to co-opt Baal's respective domains.

3.1 Polemical Appropriation

More than any other modern scholar, Yairah Amit delves into the rhetorical device of polemics. I define "polemic" as an aggressive, controversial verbal or written attack against the opinions, principles or doctrines of another. As such, polemics permeate the Hebrew Bible and are frequently invoked to explain a particular position on what are often controversial issues. Prophetic texts frequently highlight controversial issues in Israel and Judah and thus reveal the ideological struggles occurring at the time of writing. The existence of such struggles presupposes that in Israel, Judah and later Yehud, different stances were taken on particular issues. Biblical writers used polemics to shape and induce uniformity in the belief patterns and in the praxis of the people of Yahweh.[1]

1. Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 4; although Amit's work focuses on biblical narratives, she maintains that polemics run throughout all genres of biblical literature. See Yairah Amit,

Ideological struggles revolve around who is an Israelite and who belongs to the congregation of the Lord, as well as the issue of foreign women.[2] Students of the Tanakh should be keenly aware of the tension present in its articulation of a universal god versus a god who chooses and is the patron of a particular people.

Amit notes that polemics are often present because of the work of editors.[3] As time went on, the societies of Israel, Judah and Yehud evolved, a state of affairs that led later redactors and editors to change and update the beliefs and praxis of their communities. Although Amit's work is concerned with the wider use of polemics in the Bible, she rightly points out that one ideological struggle unveiled by biblical texts was between those who allowed room for the existence of deities in addition to Yahweh and others who denied the existence of other divine beings.[4] These competing ideologies are unequivocally displayed beside one another in Psalm 96.4–5: "For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods. For all the gods of the people are idols, but the Lord made the heavens." If Yahweh had always been conceptualized as the sole deity, one must ask whether it would have been necessary to make explicit the polemical comment "all the gods of the people are idols."

Amit identifies three main categories of polemics in the Hebrew Bible that are sometimes displayed beside one another as in Psalm 96.4–5.[5] Discerning each category requires the identification of the subject and the stance, or stances, of the polemic. The subject is basically the "issue that stood at the center of an ideological struggle,"[6] and the stance is the position taken in relation to that issue.

The first category, the explicit polemic, is one in which both subject and stance are clearly stated. Such is the case in Psalm 82 where Elohim takes his seat within the council of the gods (Elohim again). Instead of judging the affairs of humans below, Elohim accuses his fellow elohims, reducing them to mere mortals (v. 7), and thus ends up being the sole Elohim. This psalm offers a conspicuous example of an explicit polemic against the other deities in the pantheon, which is dismembered and abolished.[7]

The polemic against Astarte, Milcom, Chemosh and Molech in 1 Kings 11.5–7 is also explicit, as these gods are named, and as the list is part of an indictment of Solomon's idolatry.

"Epoch and Genre: The Sixth Century and the Growth of Hidden Polemics," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (eds O. Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 135–51 (137).

2. Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 5.

3. Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 32–40.

4. Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 28–9.

5. David Marcus, review of Yairah Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, *BibInt* 12 (2004): 324.

6. Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 7.

7. See P. Machinist, "How Gods Die, Biblically and Otherwise. A Problem of Cosmic Restructuring," in *Reconsidering the Concept of Revolutionary Monotheism* (ed. B. Pongratz-Leisten; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 189–240.

Less frontal but no less violent is the polemic against Asherah in Zechariah 5.5–11. As noted in Chapter 2, it is via a pseudo anagram of the Hebrew word for wickedness (רשעה) that Asherah (אשרה) is attacked. As she is not explicitly mentioned, the polemic is implicit, but, since there is no doubt that it is now Yahweh who commands her traditional domain, this text sits at the limit between explicit and implicit polemics.

Another example of an explicit polemic revolves around the issue of child sacrifice. In the context of Yahweh's stern critique of Jerusalem for her fashioning of idols representing other deities, Ezekial 16.20–1 reads: "You took your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. As if your whorings were not enough! You slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering to them." Further, in Ezek. 20.25–6 Yahweh states: "I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live. I defiled them through their very gifts, in their offering up all their firstborn, in order that I might horrify them, so that they might know that I am Yahweh."[8] Since both the subject (child sacrifice) and the stance (child sacrifice is wrong) are explicit, these statements are examples of an explicit polemic.

Conversely, implicit polemic is explicit on the subject matter, but the stance is expressed indirectly.[9] Amit argues persuasively that there are also implicit polemics against child sacrifice in the biblical texts, which were aimed at refuting a cult that existed in Judah up until the beginning of the Second Temple.[10] For instance, the near sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham (Gen. 22) is explicit on the subject of child sacrifice but its stance is expressed in a roundabout manner.[11] "Through this indirect means of stressing the most terrible thing imaginable, the story of the Binding expresses its stance in the struggle against offering human sacrifice: that human sacrifice is an awful thing, in which God is not interested."[12] This example underscores the fact that the implicit polemic requires greater reader involvement, which in turn builds greater persuasiveness.[13] The presence of both explicit and implicit polemics on child sacrifice reveals an ideological struggle.

8. Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 67. Amit also lists Leviticus 18.21, Deut. 12.31, Jer. 7.31, Jer. 32.35, Isa. 57.5, Ps. 106.37–38 as further examples of explicit polemics pertaining to child sacrifice. It should be noted that Jer. 7.31 seems to contradict Ezek. 20.25–6 regarding Yahweh's involvement in child sacrifice, for in Ezek. 20.25–6 Yahweh appears to command child sacrifice, whereas Jer. 7.31 refutes such a view: "And they go on building the high place of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire—which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind." It should be noted that Ezek. 20.25–6 is the only instance in the Hebrew Bible, to my knowledge, where Yahweh is portrayed as commanding child sacrifice.

9. Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 56–7.

10. Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 72.

11. Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 67–72.

12. Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 70.

13. Amit, *Hidden Polemics,* 57.

Psalm 82 mentioned above combines the explicit polemic against the elohims with a non-polemical assumption that Yahweh is to be equated with El. Although the name "Yahweh" never occurs in this psalm, the reader equates the Elohim, who condemns the others, with Yahweh, since Yahweh and El are often equated in the Hebrew Bible.[14] The implication is that Yahweh-Elohim is to be understood as the numen who now commands what was formerly thought to be under the care of other deities of the pantheon.

Amit's third category, hidden polemics, is far more difficult to identify. In contrast to explicit and implicit polemics, which transcend the various genres of the Hebrew Bible, Amit limits the presence of hidden polemics to biblical narratives.[15] In hidden polemics the subject is not explicit while the stance may be explicit or implicit.[16] Amit stresses the need to check the exegetical tradition in order to confirm that other scholars have gleaned a reference to the hidden subject in the text and to check that other biblical material contains a polemic on the same subject.[17] Sufficient landmarks pointing to the polemic and subject are a prerequisite for the presence of a hidden polemic. Moreover, it is not sufficient to extrapolate different traditions to argue for the existence of a polemic. One needs to be able to display that texts reflect an ideological struggle.[18] Although they are a fascinating device, the interpretation of hidden polemics is subjective and could be controversial. Therefore this category is omitted in the present discussion of Yahweh's appropriation of other deities' attributes.

Having eliminated the hidden polemic, it should also be pointed out that Amit's criteria for explicit and implicit polemics can account for many texts betraying Yahweh appropriating the domains of the different deities in the pantheons of Israel and Judah. However, her classification of explicit and implicit polemics can also be constricting, and can frustrate a holistic approach to categorizing the totality of texts in the Hebrew Bible displaying appropriation which could be termed polemical. The vast majority of appropriation texts are polemical, but they do not always fit well into Amit's categories.[19] Furthermore, a polemic betraying appropriation on the part of Yahweh is often not the main point or intention of a text. It is, rather, a peripheral expression, subtext or overtone, but remains polemic nonetheless.

Amit's categories are also more geared towards narrative sequences whose main purpose was polemical. Thus, to simplify and preempt any quibbling over how to classify a particular polemic, it is wise to simply classify polemical texts as

14. For a summary of the two different manners in which Psalm 82 has been interpreted, see David Frankel, "El as the Speaking Voice in Psalm 82.6–8," *JHS* 10 (2010): 2–24. Available from: http//www.jhsonline.org

15. Amit, "Epoch and Genre," 137 notes that explicit and implicit polemics exist in narratives, legal material, prophetic literature, psalms and wisdom literature.

16. Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 93.

17. Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 96–7.

18. Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 10.

19. The subject of the polemic in 2 Sam. 2–4 is implicit.

explicitly polemical or implicitly polemical, provided an attack directed against other numina in favor of Yahweh can be garnered. Polemical texts condemn another god overtly, or by means of some clues which, taken together, disparage any deity aside from Yahweh and reveal, either explicitly or by implication, the appropriation of the numen being disparaged. Implied polemics are more subtle in bringing their intentions to the fore, but ultimately they function in the same manner as explicit polemics.

In regard to the invectives directed against Baal's cult in the Book of Hosea, Day writes that "polemic can sometimes involve taking up one's enemies' imagery and reutilizing it for one's own purpose."[20] Noting that "Israelite religion incorporated some of the characteristics of other deities into the divine personage of Yahweh," Smith clearly sees that polemic against deities other than Yahweh goes beyond mere condemnation. "For although polemic rejected other deities, Yahwistic polemic assumed that Yahweh embodied the positive characteristics of the very deities it was condemning."[21] Day and Smith mention polemics in passing, mainly in connection with Baal, though Smith notes they exist "to a lesser extent for asherah and the sun."[22] I take these comments from Smith and Day to their logical end, contending that polemics were a means of displaying appropriation, and advancing monotheism, not only for Yahweh's appropriation of Baal's characteristics but also for his appropriation of the domain of all other deities formerly worshipped in Israel and Judah.

To a large extent, the present work builds on Smith's. Yet, I disagree with Smith's view that "The convergence of other deities, or at least their characteristics, toward Yahweh involved no single pattern."[23] I argue instead that the appropriation of the domain of other deities in the Hebrew Bible can be broken down into three categories of texts. Explicit and implicit polemical texts constitute the first two categories of the typology. The third one is non-polemical transference texts.

3.2 Non-Polemical Appropriation

In addition to the categories of polemical and implied polemical texts, I propose another category, hereafter designated as non-polemical transference texts. These are texts that transfer to Yahweh the duties or traits which belonged to another deity, without the use of a polemic. These texts presuppose that the transference to Yahweh of the duties and traits which belonged to other members of the pantheon

20. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 118.

21. Smith, *Early History*, 9 and 200–1 where Smith writes, "Polemic was not only a negative factor in these cases, but involved a positive process at work as well, namely, the attribution of the positive characteristics of other deities to Yahweh."

22. Smith, *Early History*, 200. For Smith the "a" in asherah is not capitalized because he understands cultic paraphernalia instead of the goddess herself in these references in the Hebrew Bible. This is dubious since the object signifies the goddess.

23. Smith, *Early History,* 200.

has already occurred, as though Yahweh had always been endowed with the traits and duties he is shown to possess.

Psalm 104 presents an example of a non-polemical transference text. Though this psalm draws more prominently on mythological imagery associated with the storm-god from the ancient Near East and applies it to Yahweh, it also borrows traits from the sun-god. Scholars have long noted similarities between this psalm and a hymn to Aten discovered at the beginning of the twentieth century on a tomb wall at Tell el-Amarna in Egypt.[24] Yet, verse 19 simply states that Yahweh made the moon to mark the seasons and that the sun knows its setting-time. In so doing, Yahweh is portrayed as controlling the sun, a domain the Egyptians ascribed to Aten and the Canaanites to Shemesh.[25] However, the appropriation of solar elements in this text is not polemical. Yahweh simply commands the sun and the life-giving properties that emanate from it.

That Psalm 104 also uses Egyptian sun-god imagery to describe Yahweh "clothed with honor and majesty and wrapped in light as with a garment" (vv. 1b–2a), this solar language is not enough to support a polemical tone. Instead of disparaging Aten or Shemesh, Psalm104 shares the peaceful monotheism of the hymn to Aten, which praises the sun-god, saying, "O sole god, like whom there is no other!"[26]

Yet, the Psalmist must have been aware that the Hebrew Bible makes it clear that worship of the sun occurred in Judah. In 2 Kings 23.5 the reader is told that Josiah deposed the priests "who made offerings to Baal, to the sun, the moon, the constellations, and all the host of the heavens." Ezekiel's vision in Ezek. 8.16 mentions men prostrating themselves to the sun toward the east. Theophoric elements in people and place-names with a Shemesh element and horse-and-rider figurines carrying a sun-disk found in Syro-Palestine in Iron-Age contexts add to this argument.[27] Yet, Psalm 104 does not polemicize against sun worship, either because it did not exist anymore when the psalm was produced, or because the writer considered it a better strategy to ignore it and ascribe the control of the sun's movements to Yahweh. Yahweh's control of the sun is presented in a matter-of-fact manner, as if he had always controlled this aspect of the cosmos. This justifies the classification as a non-polemical transference text.[28] The reduction, however, of the sun to a mere calendar indicator may be an implicit polemic

24. Paul E. Dion, "YHWH as Storm-God and Sun-God: The Double Legacy of Egypt and Canaan as Reflected in Psalm 104," *ZAW* 103 (1991): 43–71; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III 101–150* (AB 17A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), 33. Most scholars today do not think the psalmist borrowed directly from the hymn to Aten. See C. J. de Moor, *Rise of Yahwism*, 69.

25. Dion, "YHWH as Storm-God," 69; J. Glen Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sun Worship in Ancient Israel* (JSOTS, 111; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 263.

26. "The Hymn to the Aton," translated by John A. Wilson, *ANET*, 369–71 (370).

27. Dion, "YHWH as Storm-God", 64.

28. For more examples where Yahweh controls the sun see, Ps. 84.11, Isa. 60.19, Jer. 31.35 and Amos 8.9, and possibly Josh. 10.12–14.

against the sun-god since it echoes Gen. 1.16 where the sun and the moon are created three days *after* the light, as though it was important for the writer that these mere luminaries were relegated to a minor position.

Other non-polemical transference texts deal with the conveyance of Asherah's domain to Yahweh where Yahweh is portrayed as watching over women during the vulnerable period of childbirth. In light of textual and archaeological evidence accrued for the veneration of Asherah in Israel and Judah, it is doubtful that Yahweh was originally portrayed with traits that belonged to his consort, or one would have to argue that the hundreds of pillar-base, clearly female, figurines found in Judean domestic contexts and tombs are representations of Yahweh and were not connected with requests to Asherah for protection during childbirth.

Salient examples come from Second Isaiah. Isa. 44.2 begins, "Thus says Yahweh who made you, who formed you in the womb," and Isa. 46.3 reads, "Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from your birth, carried from the womb."[29] These texts exhibit the transference of Asherah's rule over wombs to Yahweh in a non-polemical way or by way of an implied polemic, depending on whether or not the audience still turned to Asherah for matters of fertility and childbirth.

To recap, polemical, implied polemical and non-polemical transference texts offer a typology for conceptualizing the biblical appropriation of the different deities' traits within the pantheon of Israel, Judah and later Yehud, via a synchronic reading of the Hebrew Bible. The polemic is sometimes just an aspect of the text, not necessarily its main point. With the attack against or denouncement of other deities, albeit subtle in the case of implied polemics, manifest in polemical and implied polemical texts, these texts simultaneously display that Yahweh presides over the domains of the deities being denounced, or they presuppose that Yahweh always had dominion over the elements of the deity being disparaged.

As non-polemical transference texts were written from the standpoint of a monotheism that had always existed, the writers of this category of texts are indeed forerunners of the early-monotheistic Yahwism model; but the claim that Yahweh had always engaged in these activities ignores the ancient reality. That the tone is not polemical reflects a conscious rhetorical strategy which the proponents of the early-monotheism model take as a true reflection of the ancient reality.

To understand the rise of strict Yahwistic monotheism, it is necessary to start with an examination of the different traits and epithets attributed to the different deities of Syro-Palestine. Arguably, the most important corpus of texts for understanding the different categories of deities and their corresponding functions comes from Ugarit.[30] This is the burden of Chapter 4. Next, one should look to the

29. Isaiah 46.4 continues "even to your old age I am he, even when you turn gray I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save." The comment "I have made" continues the idea that it is Yahweh who is in charge of what occurs in the womb.

30. Despite the temporal and special difference (Late Bronze Age and Northern Syria), the relevance of Ugaritic texts for the study of the Hebrew Bible is without question, though one should be cautious in drawing conclusions about the religions of Israel and Judah based

Hebrew Bible with an eye towards identifying where Yahweh has taken over and engaged in the activities that originally belonged to other gods in the pantheon. Chapter 5 deals with explicitly polemical texts, while Chapter 6 examines texts in which the polemic is implicit and texts in which the transference is non-polemical. These three categories account for all the texts that betray Yahweh's appropriation of the domains of other deities, in particular Baal's. As Baal is the prime target of biblical monotheism, Baal takes the most space in the next chapters.

solely on the Ugarit corpus. See Niehr, "Rise of YHWH," 45–72. For the transliteration of some of these texts, see Manfried Dietrich, Oswald Loretz and Joaquin Sanmartin, *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts: From Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places* (KTU) (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995). For an overview of the history of the site, see Marguerite Yon, *The City of Ugarit at Tell Ras Shamra* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006).

Chapter 4

BAAL

ויעשׂו בני ישׂראל את הרע בעיני יהוה ויעבדו את הבעלים

Judges 2:11

There are more polemics directed against Baal in the Hebrew Bible than against any other. It is therefore fitting to examine those instances where Yahweh takes over Baal's domain. It will be seen that the categories of polemical, implied polemical and non-polemical transference texts best account for categorizing such instances, offering a new and simplified appropriation typology for conceiving of texts that betray Yahweh's takeover of other members of the pantheon. Before looking at these instances of appropriation, however, a short history of Baal, the storm-weather god of Syro-Palestine, is in order, as well as how one should understand the references to this deity in the Hebrew Bible.

4.1 Baal at Ugarit

The cache of texts discovered in 1929 at Ras Shamra provided a corrective in understanding Baal in the Hebrew Bible. Nineteenth-century scholarship had generally understood "Baal" as an appellative or a title since the term "baal" also means "lord, master, owner."[1] Occurrences of Baal could thus be interpreted as designations of any deity venerated in Syro-Palestine, including Shemesh, Molech, Resheph and even Yahweh.[2]

The discoveries at Ras Shamra made two invaluable points: the first was the preeminence of the storm-god of Syro-Palestine, concomitantly showing that Baal could be a proper name—in fact the most frequently attested deity in the

1. David J. A. Clines, "בעל," *DCH,* 237.

2. J. Andrew Dearman, "Interpreting the Religious Polemics against Baal and the Baalim in the Book of Hosea," *OTE* 14 (2001): 10.

onomastics from Ugarit:[3] the second was to equate Baal and Hadad, whose names are set in poetic parallelism in KTU 1.10.II.4–5.[4]

These finds ushered in a new understanding, which views Baal and the different references to him in the Hebrew Bible as local manifestations of the cosmic storm-god, Baal/Hadad.[5]

Since the finds at Ugarit, it has been argued that Hadad was the original name of the storm-god in the ancient Near East, later known in the Hebrew Bible as Baal. It is further contended that Baal was an appellative that later developed into a proper noun replacing the designation Hadad.[6] Put slightly differently, the term "baal" was an epithet for Hadad, as it carried a connotation of lord and the like, and later became a proper name for this deity.[7] However, evidence from Mari, Ebla and Ur III suggests that Baal was the proper name of a Northwest Semitic divinity already in third and second millennium Mesopotamia.[8] This line of interpretation is based on a list of divinities from Abu Salabikh which dates to around 2600 BCE. It is the earliest attestation of a deity specifically named "Baal." In this list, the "insertion of a generic appellative like 'lord' appears most unlikely."[9] It is reasonable to postulate some fluidity and that the term "Baal" oscillated between a proper and common noun in the course of its long history, while the origins of the term and its original usage remain elusive. The same can be said of the feminine form of Baal, Baalat, which denotes a goddess.[10]

3. Gregorio del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion: According to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit* (trans. W. Watson; Bethesda: CDL Press, 1999), 339.

4. Peter J. van Zijl, *Baal: A Study of Texts in Connexion with Baal in the Ugaritic Epics* (AOAT 10; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1972), 347; Ulf Oldenburg, *The Conflict Between El and Baʿal in Canaanite Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 58–9; J. C. Greenfield, "Hadad," *DDD,* 378. For an example of parallelism between Baal and Hadad in Pardee's translation of the Baal Cycle, see "The Baʿlu Myth," trans. Dennis Pardee, *COS* 1.86, 263.

5. See Dearman, "Polemics against Baal," 9–25. For local manifestations of Baal see Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 68–70; Saul M. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel* (SBLMS 34; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 63 writes that "there is much evidence for local manifestations of a single deity in West Semitic religion."

6. Oldenburg, *Conflict Between El and Baʿal*, 58–9; Green, *Storm-God*, 173; K. van der Toorn, "Yahweh," *DDD,* 916.

7. Though Baal later became the proper name of Hadad, it did not cease to be used as an appellative for other deities. In the Punic world, Baal Addir and Baal Hamon were used to designate the high god El; see Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult*, 62–7.

8. Giovanni Pettinato, "Pre-Ugaritic Documentation of Baʿal," in *The Bible World: Essays in Honor of Cyrus H. Gordon* (eds Gary Rendsburg et al.; New York: KTAV Publishing, 1980), 203–9.

9. Pettinato, "Pre-Ugaritic Documentation," 205–206.

10. Baalat is used as a divine name and an appellative and is attested as early as the middle of the third millennium BCE, as Baal is. The term is used in both ways at Ugarit, and it is attested in the Amarna correspondence. As a divine name, she appears to have been the most prominent goddess at Byblos. In the Hebrew Bible she appears only in toponyms, see

4.2 Baal/Hadad

Hadad was the West Semitic or Syrian storm-god who was equivalent to, or a cognate of, Adad or Addu, the Amorite storm-god. Adad is the Akkadian version of Ugaritic and Aramaic Hadad. Hadad probably means "to roar, rumble or chatter," the meaning of the Akkadian verb *hadādu*.[11] The name "Hadad" is thus onomatopoeic, reflecting the sound of the storm.[12]

Hadad appears on the scene quite early and is attested already in the nineteenth century BCE in Egyptian Execration Texts, in the Old Akkadian period at Ebla, at Mari and later in the El Amarna letters.[13] Dating to the second millennium BCE and in the immediate vicinity of what would later become Israel and Judah, Adad is attested to on an Akkadian cylinder seal possibly found in the vicinity of Jericho, and in a cuneiform letter from Taanach which equally seems to attest to the deity name Baal in the opening message of its text. Another letter found along with the Taanach letter at the same location and dating from the same period reads "May the Storm-god guard your life."[14]

The earliest storm-gods are attested to in the Sumerian pantheon. The Sumerian counterpart of Adad/Hadad was Ishkur. This is not to deny that several Semitic storm-gods are attested for the Old Akkadian period.[15] Indeed, the logogram for

E. T. Mullen, Jr., "Baalat," *DDD* 139–40. As an epithet, Baalat stood in the place of different goddesses at different times and locales, including Egyptian Hathor, Asherah and Anat. On Hathor in the Sinai, see Joseph Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet: An Introduction to West Semitic Epigraphy and Palaeography* (2nd edn; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1987 repr. 1997), 23–4; Smith, *God in Translation*, 64–5.

11. A. Leo Oppenheim, ed., "hadādu," *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1956), 22.

12. J. J. M. Roberts, *The Earliest Semitic Pantheon: A Study of the Semitic Deities Attested in Mesopotamia before Ur III* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1972), 14.

13. Greenfield, "Hadad," 378–9; Izak Cornelius, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Baʿal: Late Bronze and Iron Age I Periods (c 1500–1000 BCE)* (Fribourg: University Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 13; according to W. Herrmann, "Baal," *DDD*, 132, the term "Baal" also appears already around 2400 BCE at Ebla in personal names and toponyms. W. F. Albright, "The Amarna Letters," in *ANET*, 484 translates Amarna letter EA 147 using the divine name Baal. William L. Moran, *The Amarna Letters* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1992) 181–2, 236–7, 245–6 translates a few tablets using the divine name Baal. These instances contain similar phrasing and all come from the beginning of the texts and seem to suggest some sort of loose association between Baal in the sky and the sun or Shemesh.

14. Wayne Horowitz and Takayoshi Oshima, *Cuneiform in Canaan: Cuneiform Sources from the Land of Israel in Ancient Times* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2006), 140 with picture on p. 237. The cylinder seal can be found on p. 97 with the picture on p. 232. For the text that attests to Baal, see pp. 132–4 with the photograph on p. 235.

15. Roberts, *Earliest Semitic Pantheon*, 14.

Ishkur was also used to denote Adad and other manifestations of the storm-god, including Addu/Baal.[16]

Storm or weather-gods do not seem to have played as prominent a role in the Sumerian pantheon as they did in later ancient Near Eastern societies, in part because Sumer's agriculture was based on irrigation. Hence, the fertility of the land was thought to depend more upon a sacred marriage rite involving the god Dumuzi and his consort Inanna than on any storm-god.[17] As Dumuzi was associated with the growth of vegetation, Ishkur was less prominent. Ishkur being the Sumerian precursor of Adad/Hadad, Baal is likely to have developed from an epithet or title of Hadad, meaning "master" or "lord," that became a proper name. In light of parallelisms between these two names in Ugaritic texts, Baal in the Hebrew Bible should be understood as a synonym for Hadad. As Baal came to be understood as another name for the god in charge of the storm/weather at this time in the Levant, he logically evolved in different local manifestations of Baal in Syro-Palestine, each with their own specificities. Baal-Zaphon (Exod. 14; Num. 33.7) was probably considered somewhat different from Baal-Perazim (2 Sam. 5.20; 1 Chron. 14.11), as was the case in the Bronze Age when the ruler of Mari, Zimri-Lim, was rebuked by Adad of Kallassu and dispensed justice to the oppressed in the name of Adad of Aleppo.[18] Similarly, a list of offerings for the different deities at Ugarit, including Baal, Baal of Aleppo and Baal of Saphon, attributes an ox and a ram to each (KTU 1.148.26–7).[19] Another list contains several mentions of Baal of Ugarit (KTU 1.119.9–10). A sixth-century BCE Phoenician amulet, probably from the vicinity of Tyre, is dedicated "To Baal Hammon and to Baal Saphon so that they bless me."[20] In the same way, the

16. Greenfield, "Hadad", 378; according to A. Green, *Storm-God*, 34–41, Enlil is the earliest attested storm-god of the Sumerian pantheon, and he states that the "earliest mythical attributes of Enlil represent the archetypal profile of every subsequent ancient Near Eastern Storm-God." Along with Ishkur, Ningirsu and Ninurta are classified as storm-gods. The name of the nine different storm-gods of the Hittites in Anatolia is written using the two different Sumerian ideograms used for Ishkur and Adad: Hilary J. Deighton, *The 'Weather-God' in Hittite Anatolia*, 48–53. According to Green, *Storm-God*, 128, the distinct trait of the Anatolian storm-gods is that they appear to be associated with subterranean waters, rivers and springs. The best known of these Anatolian weather-gods is the Hurrian storm-god, Teshub.

17. Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 87–8.

18. J. J. M. Roberts, "The Mari Prophetic Texts in Transliteration and English Translation," in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Collected Essays* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 160, #4. For a list of local manifestations, see Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 68–70.

19. N. Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit* (2nd edn; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 429.

20. André Lemaire, "Deuteronomy 6:6, 9 in the Light of Northwest Semitic Inscriptions," in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism* (eds C. Cohen et al.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 526.

inscriptions from Kuntillet Ajrud juxtapose Yahweh of Samaria and Yahweh of Teman.[21]

4.3 Baal and Baal in the Hebrew Bible

By the first millennium BCE, a bifurcation had occurred. Baal became a Canaanite god and Hadad an Aramean one.[22] While Baal-Hadad was the storm-god of Syro-Palestine, it is not established that references to Baal in the Hebrew Bible refer specifically to the storm-god Baal/Hadad and his various manifestations.[23] The definite article that is nearly always added to the sixty-eight occurrences of the word "baal" and to all eighteen instances of *baalim* in the Hebrew Bible indicates that the term is not used as a proper noun. In the case of Baal and Asherah in the Hebrew Bible, the opposite phenomenon occurred. These proper names were neutralized through the addition of the article which turned them into common names.[24]

4.3.1 The Asherah

The neutralization of a divine name with the article is very clear in 1 Kings 15.13: "He (King Asa) also removed his mother Maacah from being queen mother, because she had made an abomination for *the* asherah." In the Masoretic Text, the lamed in front of Asherah is vocalized to indicate the presence of the

21. On the multiplicity of manifestations of the same god see Benjamin D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

22. Jonas C. Greenfield, "Aspects of Aramean Religion," in *Ancient Israelite Religion* (eds P. D. Hanson et al., Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 67–78.

23. J. Andrew Dearman, "Baal in Israel: The Contribution of Some Place Names and Personal Names to an Understanding of Early Israelite Religion," in *History and Interpretation: Essays in Honor of John H. Hayes* (eds M. P. Graham, W. P. Brown and J. K. Kuan; JSOTS, 173; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993); Klaus Koch, "Ugaritic Polytheism and Hebrew Monotheism in Isaiah 40–55," in *The God of Israel* (ed. R. P. Gordon; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Baruch Halpern, "The Baal (and the Asherah) in Seventh-Century Judah: YHWH's Retainers Retired," in *Konsequente Traditionsgeschichte* (ed. R. Bartelmus et al.; Fribourg: University Press; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 122 writes, "'The baal', Hebrew hab-ba'al, does not refer to a single god, Baal, by name, but is a title, specifically, 'master, lord.' It is sometimes applied to Yhwh, the high god …" Conrad E. L'Heureux, *Rank Among the Canaanite Gods: El, Ba'al, and the Repha'im* (HSM 21, Ann Arbor: Scholars Press, 1979), 66 argues that "the historian of religion cannot presume that the many Baal deities documented in and out of the Bible are all manifestations of Hadad, nor even that Hadad was the principal foe combated by Yahweh's prophets."

24. See T. L. J. Mafico, "The Divine Compound Name יהוה אלהים and Israel's Monotheistic Polytheism," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 22 (1996): 164.

article (*lāsherah*). With the article, Asherah becomes an object, elsewhere often rendered by modern translators as a "sacred pole." Here, however, translators retain Asherah since the article spoils the logic of the passage. While making an image of the goddess Asherah or for the goddess Asherah made sense, making an image of an image or an object for an object does not.[25] Since, however, in this particular case the article is invisible in an unvocalized text, the *heh* being absorbed between the lamed and the aleph, it is impossible to know whether the pre-Masoretic text, before the tenth century CE, was read and understood with the article or without it. The case for a much earlier date is much stronger when the *heh* of the article is visible when no preposition is affixed to the word "Asherah." For instance, *the* asherah in 2 Kings 18.4 can be taken as a physical object since Hezekiah cut it (וכרת את האשרה). Such poles are now related to the so-called proto-aeolic capitals ….[26] However, the carved image of *the* Asherah (האשרה פסל) that Manasseh supposedly made (2 Kgs 21.7) makes no more sense than Maacah's (1 Kgs 15.13). Hence it is not surprising that the words "he (Manasseh) had made" (אשר עשה) were probably absent in the Hebrew text originally translated into Greek, as the textual note of the *BHS* indicates.[27] Although the claim that Manasseh set up a statue of Asherah in the temple fitted his portrayal as an evil king, adding that he had made it was a rather awkward and ultimately failed attempt to overcome the notion that what he had made was a statue of a sacred pole. Hence, the article in front of Asherah was a euphemistic device to avoid the admission that the temple of Jerusalem had housed a representation of Yahweh's paredra.[28] Turning the goddess into an inanimate object opened the way for the transference of Asherah's traditional roles in favor of Yahweh. The resulting awkwardness was the price to be paid for the emergence of Yahwistic monotheism.

In poetic contexts, the names of some deities were left, since *deber* (דבר) in Habakkuk 3.5 can be taken as a disease—the plague—as much as the name of the god who sends it. Similarly, Deuteronomy 33.14 can be understood as references to the physical sun and the moon (ירח שמש) rather than their divine equivalent.[29]

25. Edelman, "Introduction," 18.

26. N. Franklin, "From Megiddo to Tamassos and Back: Putting the 'Proto-ionic Capital' in its Place," in *The Fire Signals of Lachish* (eds I. Finkelstein and N. Na'aman; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 129–40.

27. NETS, 312 translates: "And he also removed his mother Ana from being a leader, because she conducted a meeting in her grove, and Asa cut down her hiding-places and burned them with fire at the Wadi Kedron."

28. See also 2 Kgs 23.4, 7 and Edelman, "Introduction," 18.

29. William W. Hallo, "One God or Many: Philological Glosses on Monotheism," in *Mishneh Todah: Studies in Deuteronomy and Its Cultural Environment in Honor of Jeffrey H. Tigay* (eds N. Fox et al.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 253–61.

4.3.2 The Baal

As scribal emendations involving the addition of the article in front of the name Asherah are attested, it is most likely that the same occurred on several occasions with Baal before textual history could formally identify the changes, but not every time, since "baal" can also be a common noun meaning "lord, master, owner."[30] Sometimes Baal refers to the different manifestations of the storm-god Baal or Hadad, and sometimes the word is a common noun meaning "lord," which in Hosea 2.16–19 refers to Yahweh.[31] Nevertheless, in most cases the references to Baal in the Hebrew Bible are references to the storm-god of Syro-Palestine, Baal/Hadad, particularly when it fits the narrative context.

Since the Hebrew Bible is concerned with uplifting Yahweh above all contenders, it does not provide much in the way of the mythology surrounding Baal. To fill this gap, we must look elsewhere.

4.4 The Ugaritic Baal Cycle

By far, the most important composition for understanding the mythology of Baal in the ancient world comes from the alphabetic cuneiform texts of the Baal Cycle,[32] found between 1930 and 1933 on six tablets in the home of the priest-scribe Ilmilku at Ugarit.[33] He was a scribe at the court of king Niqmaddu (the

30. See Dearman, "Baal in Israel," 190.

31. See also בעליה 1 Chron. 12.6 and Day, "Baal," 548.

32. The Baal Cycle has been given priority over other evidence, such as the much later *History of the Phoenicians* by Philo of Byblos, preserved in Eusebius of Caesarea, where Baal plays only a minor role. For a summary of the *History of the Phoenicians* see Handy, *Among the Host*, 44–8. For the Greek text of *History of the Phoenicians* with critical apparatus and English translation see Harold W. Attridge and Robert A. Oden, Jr., *Philo of Byblos The Phoenician History: Introduction, Critical Text, Translation, Notes* (CBQMS 9; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981); the Baal Cycle can be found in KTU 1.1–6 and *CTA* 1–6. For an English translation of the Cycle, see "The Baʿlu Myth," trans. by Dennis Pardee (*COS* 1.86:241–74), or Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 34–146. For a listing of other texts from Ugarit concerning Baal, see Johannes C. de Moor, *The Seasonal Pattern in the Ugaritic Myth of Baʿlu: According to the Version of Ilimilku* (AOAT 16; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1971), 3–8. De Moor notes most of these are probably not components of the Baal Cycle, but are separate stories or religious texts that involve Baal. Regarding the dating of the Baal Cycle tablets, de Moor writes, "the tablets were fixed between 1380 and 1360 BC and it is argued that the text itself originated in Ugarit about the middle of the second millennium BC, though some earlier traditions might have been incorporated" (p. 245).

33. Peter C. Craigie, *Ugarit and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 61; Yon, *City of Ugarit*, 111.

ending of the name is derived from Hadad) as the colophons of *CTA* 4 and 6 indicate and all six tablets appear to derive from the same hand.[34]

It is possible that the six tablets do not constitute one grand narrative sequence and should rather be read as independent stories.[35] For one thing, the tablets are broken and damaged so that half of the story is missing, often at key points. Whether or not the stories belong together, Baal is the key figure in all of them. Thus, they are useful for understanding Baal and the mythology surrounding him in the northern Levant in the Late Bronze Age.

Most scholars take the tales as a grand narrative and proceed with such an assumption. The most likely sequence is as follows: (1) Baal's conflict with Yam, (2) the building of a palace for Baal and (3) Baal's conflict with Mot.[36] A brief synopsis is in order; it follows the reading and translation laid out by Pardee in *COS*.

4.4.1 Baal's Conflict with Yam

This section recounts Baal's mythical conflict with Yam, the divinized sea.[37] Aspiring to be king, Yam dispatches messengers, who strike fear in the gods, and demands that El turn Baal over to him.[38] The Bull, El, acquiesces and informs Yam that "the son of Dagon, Baal, is now your prisoner." Baal is enraged and smites the messengers of Yam. With two maces made by the divine craftsman Kothar-wa-Khasis, Baal faces Yam and eventually strikes him on the forehead. Yam is declared dead. This part recalls Marduk's battle against the watery Tiamat in Enuma Elish.[39] Hence, the ensuing break of the tablet may have contained a creation account.[40]

34. *COS* 1.86:241. If all six tablets are to be read in one grand narrative, it would consist of approximately 2,350 lines.

35. Craigie, *Ugarit*, 62; Green, *Storm-God*, 178 n.116.

36. Craigie, *Ugarit*, 62–6; Day, "Baal," 545.

37. At Ugarit, Yam is also called Nahar (River), and possible evidence exists for the presence of a cult to Yam at Mari and Emar. See Green, *Storm-God*, 179–81.

38. El was the head of the pantheon at Ugarit and Asherah was his wife. Marvin H. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts* (SVT, 2; Leiden: Brill, 1955) argues that Baal supplanted El at Ugarit, but L'Heureux, *Rank,* 60 dismisses the notion that the conflict between Yahweh and Baal in the Hebrew Bible is an extension of the conflict that arose between El and Baal. See also Arvid S. Kapelrud, "The Relationship between El and Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts," in *The Bible World* (eds G. Rendsburg et al.; New York: KTAV, 1980), 79–85.

39. For translations of *Enuma Elish*, see Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* (2nd edn.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951); Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others* (rev. edn; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 228–77.

40. Kenton L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible: A Guide to the Background Literature* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 333.

4.4.2 Baal's Palace

The next section appears to begin with a feast in Baal's honor. Anat is Baal's devoted sister/companion, "a feisty daughter figure is the chief god El," and "a young female who absconds from the constraints of marriage and domesticity."[41] Anat is washing the blood of warriors off her body when messengers from Baal explain that he understands lightening which not even the heavens know. He summons Anat to his home on Mount Saphon. When Anat visits Baal, she agrees to help him convince El to give a house to Baal. If he does not agree, Anat promises to trample her father, El, till his gray hair will run with blood.

Next, Asherah, El's consort, joins in the task of convincing El to allow the building of a palace for Baal. The "great lady of the Sea" and mother of the gods at the head of the pantheon convinces El. Asherah congratulates El for his favorable answer and promises: "For now Baʿlu (can) send his rain in due season, send the season of driving showers; (can) Baʿlu shout aloud in the clouds, shoot (his) lightening-bolts to the earth" (*COS* 1.86.260).

Baal's palace is built in seven days with the help of fire. Asherah's seventy sons are invited to the banquet to celebrate its completion. Then Baal wants a window to be set in his new palace, something he had previously refused. Kothar-wa-Khasis installs the window and Baal himself "opens up the rift in the clouds, Baʿlu emits his holy voice, Baʿlu makes the thunder roll over and over again. His [holy] voice [causes] the earth [to tremble], [at his thunder] the mountains shake with fear" (*COS* 1.86:262). The waters from above pour out of the window onto the land and Baal is now in control of rain and of the fertility of the land.

4.4.3 Baal's Conflict with Mot

This portion of the cycle begins with a conflict between Baal and another of El's sons, Mot (Death), because Baal had struck Lotan, the fleeing and twisting seven-headed serpent. Mot threatens to lock Baal among the gods of the underworld, "and the Gods will know that you are dead" (*COS* 1.86.266–7). After copulating with a heifer, Baal is killed by Mot who dispatches him to the underworld. El and Anat mourn the death of Baal, sitting on the ground, pouring dirt on their heads, wailing, cutting themselves and wondering what will become of the people.

El and Asherah decide that Athtar shall replace Baal, but he turns out to be unfit to fill Baal's seat on Mount Saphon. In her anger, Baal's sister Anat seizes Mot, kills him, splits him in two and winnows him with a winnowing-fork. Creator El has a dream in which he learns Baal is alive, for the "heavens rain down" (*COS* 1.86.271). Anat rushes off to find Baal, and Baal takes his throne back for seven years, until Mot reappears to challenge Baal.

The battle between Baal and Mot seems to end in stalemate. Eventually Mot capitulates, as Shapshu convinces him to concede victory, arguing that El will

41. Kelly J. Murphy, "Myth, Reality, and the Goddess Anat: Anat's Violence and Independence in the Baʿal Cycle," *UF* 41 (2009) 525–41 (526–7).

no longer listen to him if he fights with the mighty Baal. Hence, we learn that it is Shapshu (the Ugaritic form of the Sun-God) who rules the dead, that is, the Rephaim.

4.5 Other Ugaritic Texts about Baal

The other Ugaritic texts which mention Baal are in agreement with the mythology of Baal observed in the Baal Cycle. For example, he is "lofty Baal" and "rider of the clouds" (KTU 1.10.I.6–7), "son of Dagon." Anat is Baal's sister and consort who gives birth to a bull after intercourse with Baal (KTU 1.10.III.12). This indirect association of Baal with the image of the bull displays the rivalry between the young fiery Baal and the old father-figure El, since only El is explicitly called a bull at Ugarit (KTU 1.10.III.15–16; 1.11; 1.12.II.54–5). Mount Zaphon is Baal's mountain (KTU 1.10.III.30), and KTU 1.41, which deals with a ritual in a certain month in the year, also displays the association of Baal with Mount Zaphon.[42] Hence, the Ugaritic texts display a consistent and coherent Baal mythology.

Tablet KTU 1.92.V.38 seems to imply that fish were offered to Baal along with wine, which suggests that Baal may have been the patron of seafarers at Ugarit. Votive anchors were found in the Baal temple, which stood atop Ugarit's acropolis so that sailors could see the temple from a great distance.[43] This accords with the motif of the storm-god conquering Yam. The Treaty of Esarhaddon with Baal of Tyre also suggests this as it portrays Baal Zaphon's power at sea.[44] Therefore, mythology of Baal at Ugarit might have also contained an element in which certain seafarers or fisherman understood Baal as their patron god protecting their endeavors at sea.

The Baal Cycle unquestionably highlights Baal's main function as the deity in charge of the rain, which bears directly on the fertility of the land. It also brings to the fore traits, duties and imagery surrounding Baal, which, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters, Yahweh appropriates for himself in the Hebrew Bible.

It is possible that the Cycle was used in yearly celebrations of Baal's enthronement to ensure timely downpours and avoid disastrous storms on crops and boats. The poetic form of the Cycle lends itself to oral delivery and liturgical hymns.

These tablets also reveal that Baal rose from the dead, and scholars view Baal as dying and rising along with the Levantine yearly cycle of vegetation, with

42. For a photograph of Mount Saphon, modern Jabal al-Aqra, located north of Ugarit, see Yon, *The City of Ugarit*, viii.

43. Herrmann, "Baal," 135; Aaron Jed Brody, "*Each Man Cried Out to his God*" *The Specialized Religion of Canaanite and Phoenician Seafarers* (HSM, 58; Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1998), 14; Yon, *City of Ugarit*, 109.

44. Herrmann, "Baal," 135; for a translation of the treaty, see Erica Reiner, "Treaty of Esarhaddon with Baal of Tyre," *ANET*, 533–4.

scorching hot summers and wet winters when the land suddenly resuscitates and flourishes.[45]

4.6 Baal Mythology

Although the extant portion of the Cycle we have today does not appear to be a creation story, there are similarities between this story and the Babylonian creation story that share with the Hebrew Bible a worldview which presupposes the presence of waters above the firmament and below the surface of a flat earth (Gen. 1.7).[46] Besides the motif of the window that lets rain pour onto the land (Gen. 7.11), at Ugarit, Baal fights representatives of the watery underworld, Tiamat and Yam, as does Marduk at Babylon. While Yahweh splits the waters without a fight in Genesis 1.7, the first element of the original *tehu-wabohu* echoes Tiamat (Gen. 1:2), and in Job 40–1 Yahweh himself reminds Job of his constant struggle against the chaotic powers of Behemoth and Leviathan.[47]

While El is officially the head of the pantheon, in Ugaritic mythology El's primacy is clearly on the wane and Baal is the rising star. Mother Asherah and Anat are both plotting to ensure the rise of a young and virile Baal over the other gods. Old El merely rubber-stamps Asherah's and Anat's choice.

Contrary to Ugarit, in the Hebrew Bible Baal is paired with Asherah or Astarte rather than with Anat. The disappearance of Anat may reflect a later phase of mythological development, when Baal phased out El entirely and took El's consort, as did Absalom when he usurped his father's throne (2 Sam. 16.22). Or, the pairing of Asherah with Baal in the Bible is a deliberate attempt to show that Asherah never was Yahweh's consort. The two options are not exclusive, but, since Kuntillet Ajrud confirms the existence of the Yahweh-Asherah pair in the religious consciousness of Israel, Baal's systematic pairing with Asherah in the Hebrew Bible does seem to present a corrective, rather than the reality on the ground. The Baal-Asherah couple conceals the dyad Asherah formed with Yahweh in the pre-biblical Hebrew mythology. As there is no extra-biblical evidence that Baal

45. Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, "The Dying and Rising God: A Survey of Research from Frazer to the Present Day," in *David and Zion* (eds B. F. Batto and K. L. Roberts; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 373–86. For other aspects of the Cycle, including the seasonal struggle between life and chaos, see Mark S. Smith, "Interpreting the Baal Cycle," *UF* 18 (1986): 313–39.

46. See John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 4, and cautionary comments by J. Edward Wright, "Biblical Versus Israelite Images of the Heavenly Realm," *JSOT* 93 (2001): 59–75.

47. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 25. Miller points out that it is difficult to know which myth is the original one. Thorkild Jacobsen, "The Battle between Marduk and Tiamat," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88 (1968), 104–8 argues for the anteriority of the Baal Cycle.

was ever paired with Asherah in the Bronze or Iron Age Levant, Baal's pairing with Asherah in the Hebrew Bible is polemical, but does not reflect historical developments in Canaanite religion. By contrast, the pairing of Baal and Astarte is attested to in Iron Age Canaanite religion.[48]

The use of plural forms in the standard formula "the baals and the asherahs" (for instance in Judg. 3.7) deliberately exaggerates the size of the traditional Hebrew pantheon which, as the Elephantine papyri indicate, was little more than a divine nuclear family. As the size of a pantheon depends on the economic resources of the land which supports it, the modest crops of the Palestinian heartland were no match for those from Mesopotamia, which did not rely exclusively on rain and could thus feed large pantheons that reflected the local representations of the main gods of the cities that flourished along the Tigris and the Euphrates. Like the article prefixed to their names, the plural forms turned Baal and Asherah into generic terms for any male and female gods, which, from the point of view of strict monotheism, justified their condemnation as an evil form of worship.

4.7 Baal Iconography

At present, iconographic evidence of Baal from the Levant includes the stele from Ugarit, cylinder seals, scarabs, bronze figurines and possibly a pottery vessel.[49] Baal is often portrayed as a standing and smiting god with a raised hand brandishing a mace, equating Baal with the Egyptian deity Seth.[50] As the Baal Cycle describes the weapons Baal wielded against Yam (*COS* 1.86.246), the Baal stele from Ugarit displays Baal brandishing a club in his right hand and a leafy branch in his other hand.[51]

The leaves signify Baal's care over the fertility of the land.[52] Besides the mace and leaves, the stele has Baal standing over the waters (Yam), sporting a conical hat with bull's horns, a common symbol of strength.[53] The Baal Cycle refers to El as "the bull" but hints that this attribute is far more fitting for Baal.[54] In the Iron

48. Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult*, 61.

49. Jürg Eggler, 2007, 19 December, Baal, in *Iconography of Deities and Demons in the Ancient Near East* (eds J. Eggler and C. Uehlinger, available at www.religionswissenschaft.uzh.ch/idd (accessed March 19, 2009).

50. Cornelius, *Iconography of the Canaanite Gods,* 143–4; Jan Assmann, *Of God and Gods* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 39–41.

51. Claude F. A. Schaeffer, *The Cuneiform Texts of Ras Shamra-Ugarit* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 64.

52. Yon, *City of Ugarit*, 135.

53. Schaeffer, *Cuneiform Texts*, 64. The motif of the victory of the Sea is also found in Egypt, see Nili Shupak, "'He Hath Subdued the Water Monster/Crocodile': God's Battle with the Sea in Egyptian Sources," *Ex oriente lux* 40 (2006–7): 77–89.

54. Arvid S. Kapelrud, *Baal in the Ras Shamra Texts* (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad, 1952), 62.

Age, Baal might have also been portrayed as a youthful god with four wings, sometimes holding a tree or blossom in his hand to signify his role in vegetation.[55]

Healing is another important aspect associated with Baal at Ugarit who is given the epithet *rpu* "healer" (KTU 1.108.1–2) or *rpu . bʿl . mhr bʿl* "healer Baal, warrior Baal" (KTU 1.22.8).[56] Baal heals the wings of birds in KTU 1.19.III.12–13; 26–27, while the Epic of Aqhat (KTU 1.17.VI.30) describes Baal as the one who brings back to life, and thus in competition with El who is portrayed as revivifying the dead in KTU 1.22.I.5–7.[57]

After his yearly death and descent to the underworld, Baal's ability to rise again was believed to enable him to bring back with him some of the *rp'um*.[58] The *rp'um* were deified ancestors, possibly deified kings and healers. They correspond to the Hebrew Rephaim (רפאים), the spirits of the dead that inhabit Sheol (Ps. 88.11; Prov. 9.18; Isa. 14.9).[59] Etymologically, the term derives from either the root רפא "to heal" or רפה "to become weak." or both.[60] At Ugarit the *rp'um* are referred to as gods (*'lnym*), minor deities.[61] Evidence also suggests they were worshipped in their own right in a cult of the dead.[62]

The *rp'um* were "acolytes of Baal,"[63] which explains why Isaiah 26.13–14 associates Baal with the Rephaim: "O Yahweh our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us (בעלונו), but we acknowledge your name alone. The dead do not live; shades do not rise because you have punished and destroyed them, and wiped out all memory of them."

This polemical allusion to Baal reflects the association between Baal and the *rp'um* at Ugarit, where kings were deified upon their death and appeared on pantheon lists under the title of *Malikūma* (KTU 1.47.33; 1.118.32).[64] In the cult of dead kings at Ugarit, Baal was seen as the leader and vital spirit of the deified kings (KTU 1.108.18).[65]

Much has been made of the three Ugaritic Rephaim texts pertaining to the

55. Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods*, 195.

56. *Contra* Simon B. Parker, "The Ugaritic Deity Rāpi'u," *UF* 4 (1972): 97–104.

57. H. Rouillard, "Rephaim," *DDD*, 693; Klaas Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (AOAT, 219; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986), 160–1 maintains that this text might attest to only El reviving the dead, rather than Baal, or both.

58. Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 276.

59. On Sheol, see Adela Yarbro Collins, "Hades," *HDB*, 395–6.

60. H. Rouillard, "Rephaim," *DDD*, 692–700 (699).

61. Conrad L' Heureux, "The Ugaritic and Biblical Rephaim," *HTR* 67 (1974): 265–6.

62. Karel van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 164. In this impressive synthesis, he notes that KTU 1.17.I.26–7 mentions erecting a stele for an ancestor in the Epic of Aqhat and that KTU 1.161 mentions offerings for a Ugaritic king.

63. L'Heureux, "Ugaritic and Biblical Rephaim," 265.

64. Rouillard, "Rephaim," 696.

65. Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 168.

banquet (*marzeah*) hosted by El, which involved much drinking (KTU 1.20–2).[66] Regardless of how one connects the *Malikūma* and *rp'um*, both fell under Baal's domain, thanks to his reviving powers and his power over the underworld. One might surmise that people thought that, during Baal's time in the underworld, he controlled these healing spirits and then brought them back to the world above upon his rising. Based on extant texts, the New Year Festival at Ugarit celebrated Baal's victory over death and the revivification of the dead. Hence, the dead were thought to participate in the annual event when Baal and the *rp'um* were venerated together.[67] The underground burial chambers, which are found in abundance throughout Ras Shamra, were probably associated with the veneration of the Rephaim.

A cult of the dead in some form was most probably celebrated in Iron Age Israel and Judah.[68] Baal's chthonic association with the *rp'um* at Ugarit is reflected in the Baal Peor episode (Num. 25.1–5; 31.16; Deut. 4.3; Josh. 22.17; Hos. 9.10 and Ps. 106.28).[69] Psalm 106.28 links Baal to the dead: "Then they attached themselves to the Baal of Peor, and ate sacrifices offered to the dead."

That Baal was venerated among the Israelites and Judahites is without question. Textual and artefactual evidence overwhelmingly attests to this fact. A temple for Baal is mentioned at Samaria (1 Kgs 16.32 and 2 Kgs 10.18–27) and at Jerusalem (2 Kgs 11.18; 2 Chron. 23.17). The personal names and the toponyms transmitted by the Hebrew Bible and the Samaria Ostraca confirm the importance of Baal in the Central Palestinian Highlands, and thus indicate that the prophetic vituperations against Baalism were founded on the actual situation. Despite the exaggeration that polemical contexts entail, the claim in Jeremiah 11.13 that "your gods have become as many as your towns, O Judah; and as many as the streets of Jerusalem

66. Theodore J. Lewis, *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit* (HSM, 39; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 172. The divine *marzeah* is often a mirror of the mundane realm, a funerary ritual (compare Prov. 31.6). See also Susan Ackerman, "A Marzēah in Ezekiel 8:7–13?" *HTR* 82 (1989): 267–81; van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia*, 169 n.84; Wayne T. Pitard, "The Ugaritic Funerary Text RS 34.126," *BASOR* 232 (1978): 67.

67. Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 155–6, 249.

68. The biblical injunctions against feeding the dead and necromancy (Deut. 18.10–12; 26.14; 2 Kgs 21.6//2 Chron. 33.6; Isa. 8.19–21) suggest that such practices were current. See Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, *Judahite Burial Practices and Beliefs about the Dead* (JSOTS, 123; Sheffield; JSOT Press, 1992); Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, "The Cult of the Dead in Judah: Interpreting the Material Remains," *JBL* 111 (1992): 213–24; Herbert Niehr, "The Changed Status of the Dead in Yehud," in *Yahwism after the Exile: Perspectives on Israelite Religion in the Persian Era* (eds R. Albertz and B. Becking; Assen: Koninklijke, 2003), 136–55; Francesca Stavrakopoulou, *Land of our Fathers: The Roles of Ancestor Veneration in Biblical Land Claims* (LHBOTS, 473; New York: T&T Clark, 2010).

69. Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 231–33. According to Green, *Storm-God*, 128, the Anatolian storm-gods were also thought to control the subterranean waters and were fundamentally chthonic in nature.

are the altars you have set up to shame, altars to make offerings to Baal," the many gods worshipped besides Baal were likely to be mainly Baal and Asherah.

Compared with Baal/Haddad, Yahweh was a newcomer on the scene and had to contend with the more deeply entrenched native cult of Baal. Yahweh would ultimately prove victorious, in no small part because of the three-pronged approach on the part of biblical writers and editors who employed polemical, implied polemical and non-polemical transference texts. It is time to look at the specifics.

Chapter 5

Polemical Appropriation of Baal

Texts that portray the appropriation of Baal are the most conspicuous and plentiful of all appropriation texts in the Bible. This chapter examines polemical texts that reveal Yahweh's usurpation of Baal's traits laid out in Chapter 4. Chapter 6 examines instances of implied polemics and non-polemical transference texts that do the same. The present chapter focuses on explicit polemics where Baal is named.

At the outset, it should be stated that an exhaustive examination of all texts displaying appropriation is not feasible; such an undertaking would undoubtedly fill several volumes. The passages discussed below highlight some salient examples that display each category, be they polemical, implied polemical or non-polemical transference texts.

It should also be stated that biblical texts often comprise several voices: that is, they are composites emanating from different scribal hands. They can be multifaceted, multivalent and function on several levels, so polemics are sometimes but one dimension of a given text.[1] Polemics are frequently embedded in narratives that serve more than one purpose. They often operate as a subtext, and the polemics are sometimes active below the surface in order to avoid provoking in the audience a negative reaction to the ideological agenda advanced in the text. As time progressed and the situation became more amenable, more overt polemics could be expressed, making Yahweh's appropriation of other deities' domains a less risky venture than was the case earlier on.

The first group of texts to examine is that of polemical narratives expressing an explicit polemic against Baal.

1. This hermeneutic is not in tension with the rabbinic analogy that, at Sinai, Torah came from above in the form of light and proceeded into a prism that refracted the light horizontally into several different lights. The lights represent the multiple interpretations possible. Gleaning polemics in different texts is often observing but one of the refracted horizontal rays of light.

5.1 Gideon (Judges 6)

The narrative thrust of Judges 6, where Gideon tears down the altar of Baal and erects one for Yahweh, is obviously a blatant attack on Baal. Appropriation consists here in displaying that Yahweh is victorious and Baal impotent. Granted, the larger context of the Gideon narrative as well as the entire Book of Judges resists oversimplification and is fraught with interpretive obstacles.[2]

The issue of sovereignty stands at the core of the Book of Judges. The Gideon narrative, one of the book's larger narratives, is the turning point of the book.[3] In this case, an anti-Baal polemic and appropriation text forms the crux of the book, striking at the heart of the issue of divine sovereignty.

Judges 6 commences by informing the reader that the Israelites are oppressed by the Midianites. In the opening scene, Gideon is threshing wheat at a wine press, rather than at a threshing floor, to conceal the grain from Midianite raiders. Yahweh's messenger appears, and, in a manner reminiscent of Moses' call narrative,[4] a dialogue ensues in which Yahweh and his messenger are interchangeable. Dubious, Gideon asks for a sign to confirm that it is truly Yahweh who is speaking (Judg. 6.17).

5.1.1 Asherah's Tree

Yahweh's messenger appears to Gideon under a particular tree (Judg. 6.11) and it is again under the same kind of tree (האלה), if not the same one, that Gideon brings food to the messenger (Judg. 6.19). As Judges 6.11 also states that that tree was owned by Gideon's father, and since Gideon ends up destroying the altar of Baal, which belonged to his father (Judg. 6.25), the hint is that Yahweh appeared to Gideon at a shrine dedicated to Baal. The standard prophetic condemnations that use the same tree designation (Hos. 4.13, Ezek. 6.13, 1 Kgs 13.14) support the idea that Gideon's encounter with Yahweh's messenger took place at an outdoor shrine.[5] The association of Asherah with large trees that express the growth and fertility powers of the goddess, and the mention of "the asherah" standing besides Baal's altar in Judg. 6.25–6, go further in indicating Yahweh's appropriation of a sacred space dedicated to Baal and his Asherah.

2. J. Cheryl Exum, "The Centre Cannot Hold: Thematic and Textual Instabilities in Judges," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 410–31.

3. J. Clinton McCann, *Judges* (Louisville: John Knox, 2002), 62.

4. For similarities as well as a few differences between the call episodes of Gideon and Moses, see Wolfgang Bluedorn, *Yahweh Versus Baalism: A Theological Reading of the Gideon-Abimelech Narrative* (JSOTS, 329; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 75–7.

5. Robert G. Boling, *Judges* (AB 6A; New York: Doubleday, 1975), 130.

5.1.2 Baal's Mace and Thunderbolt

The staff with which the divine messenger strikes the food offering laid out on the rock by Gideon, and the fire that consumes it (Judg. 6.21) recall the mace and lightning bolts from Baal imagery (§4.6). Although the fire is said to spring from the rock, it is at the command of Yahweh that the messenger kindles the fire. Hence, Yahweh is shown to command fire and lightning: Baal's domain, right at a cultic site dedicated to Baal and Asherah. And it is there that Gideon is to tear down the altar of Baal and replace it with an altar for Yahweh (Judg. 6.24). Despite the fact that Gideon does so under the cover of night, from fear of being caught, the polemic is explicit (Judg. 6.25–7).

5.1.3 Two Bulls

The two bulls mentioned in the Gideon episode are somewhat confusing, except that they build an interesting parallelism. It seems that Gideon has to pull down Baal's altar with his father's bull and then, in this order (במערכה), sacrifice the second bull (Judg. 6.26). As Gideon's father is called Joash, a Yahwistic name, the text admits that the bull is the symbol of both Baal *and* Yahweh. Gideon sacrifices Baal's bull to Yahweh, but instead of insisting that from now on the bull signifies only Yahweh, the second bull exits from the scene without leaving any traces, like Yahweh's messenger. The association of Baal with the bull was supposedly too well established to operate a simple transfer from Baal to Yahweh. It was deemed safer to silence Yahweh's association with bovine imagery.

Once the townspeople and Joash discover what happened during the night, Gideon is named Jerubbaal, "Let Baal contend against him," or "Let Baal contend with him," suggesting that Gideon was only called so after overthrowing Baal's altar. The text builds a pseudo-etymology for Jerubbaal upon Joash's answer to his fellow townsmen. Joash suggests that instead of punishing Gideon they should let Baal deal with Gideon himself and thus prove his mettle. Since it was only from that day on that Gideon was supposedly called Jerubbaal, it is obvious that Baal did not contend against Gideon, who escaped unscathed. If actual people were named Jerubbaal, the story offers a new aetiology that neutralizes the theophoric element, Baal, and makes Jerubbaal/Gideon the champion of monotheist Yahwism.[6]

5.1.4 Baal's Dew

The elaborate divination procedure by which Gideon confirms his call to lead Israel in battle against the Midianites and Amalekites is another jab at Baal. Although it is Elohim who is involved in the sign of the fleece in verses 36–40, the fact that Gideon is possessed by the spirit of Yahweh (Judg. 6.34) shows that Yahweh is the supreme God (Elohim), holding the rank of El at Ugarit. In a reversal of the trend observed at Ugarit, the fusion Yahweh/Elohim reinstates El

6. Boling, *Judges*, 130.

in the position he held before Baal usurped his command of the fertility of the land. Sending dew at will on the fleece, or around it, Yahweh appropriates another of Baal's traditional prerogatives (KTU 1.19.I.44).[7]

Not only does Baal command the dew and rain at Ugarit, but three of his daughters seem to represent types of mist or dew. They are: Taliya, Pidriya and Arsay.[8] The latter two are attested on a list of deities, while Taliya, the "dewy one" personifies dew itself.[9] An enthronement hymn to Baal confirms Baal's association with dew by mentioning his dew-drenched brow (KTU 1.101).[10]

The much earlier Babylonian Atrahasis Epic tells how the gods decided to eliminate humankind by holding back rainfall, because humans were too noisy and disrupted their sleep. In that story, the dew is controlled by Adad. Human beings ultimately build a temple to the weather-god, Adad. In exchange for the sacrifices offered to him, Adad sends dew upon the fields, and order is restored.[11] There can be no doubt that in the ancient world dew and rain were considered gifts from the weather-god, Hadad/Baal.

5.1.5 Yahweh as Fertility-God

Dew and rain, essential ingredients for the fertility of the land, are mentioned side by side in the Hebrew Bible as metaphors for the teachings of the Torah (Deut. 32.2), and in the Song of the Bow intoned by David after the death of Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam. 1.21).

As is the case with Gideon's fleece, the control of the dew is ascribed to Elohim in Genesis 27.28, a non-polemical text discussed in Chapter 6 (§6.1.3).

By contrast, in Judges 6, the tearing down of Baal's altar, the burning of Baal's bull with the wood of the Asherah pole and the signs of dew are transparent polemics by which Yahweh is depicted as replacing Baal as the storm-god ensuring the fertility of the fields. Despite Gideon's idolatry in Judges 8,[12] Yahweh granted Gideon the victory over his enemies, a house of his own (Judg. 8.29), a fabulously large dynasty, a peaceful death at a good old age and a burial in the tomb of his father.

7. Vince Endris, "Yahweh versus Baal: A Narrative-Critical Reading of the Gideon/Abimelech Narrative," *JSOT* 33 (2008): 173–95 (177); Fred Woods, *Water and Storm Polemics against Baalism in the Deuteronomic History* (American University Studies, Series 7, Theology and Religion 150; New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 68. For a translation of the Story of Aqhat (KTU 1.17–1.19), see Wyatt, *Religious Texts*, 246–312.

8. Healey, "Dew," 249–50; John Day, "Echoes of Baal's Seven Thunders and Lightnings in Psalm XXIX and Habakkuk III. 9 and the Identity of the Seraphim in Isaiah VI," *VT* 29 (1979): 148 shows that RS 24.245 speaks of the "dew goddess Taliya," and *CTA* 5. vv. 10–11 contains an "allusion to the dew goddesses Pidriya and Taliya," both appearing within a context that alludes to Baal.

9. Healey, "Dew," 249; Kapelrud, *Baal*, 82 thinks that a cult was rendered to Pidriya.

10. Wyatt, *Religious Texts*, 388–90.

11. Lang, *Hebrew God*, 186–7 sees this story as portraying a form of temporary monolatry.

12. Exum, "Centre," 419.

5.2 The Elijah-Elisha Cycle

The Elijah-Elisha cycle extends from 1 Kings 17 through 2 Kings 13.21, with some chapters that do not concern Elisha directly, notably 2 Kings 7 up to the death of Elisha in 2 Kings 13. This narrative abounds with attacks against Baal.

The northern setting of the stories reflects the ideology of the Book of Kings, which depicts the northern kingdom of Israel, in particular the Omride dynasty, as fertile ground for Baalism, thanks to the diplomatic ties of King Ahab with the kingdoms of Sidon and Tyre.[13]

Despite the presence of many parallels between the feats attributed to the heroes, the Elisha narratives differ notably from the Elijah stories in that they display no overt reference to a struggle between Baalism and Yahwism. Moreover, in the Elijah narratives, the Omrides are the enemy while Elisha is very close to an anonymous king of Israel. The difference has puzzled scholars who wondered why the Elisha narratives were included in the Book of Kings and for what purpose.[14] One hypothesis sees the Elisha narrative as the source for the more recent Elijah narrative,[15] which neatly explains the differences between the two stories as the sharpening of the anti-Baal polemics in the Elijah stories, in line with the historical evolution of monotheistic Yahwism. Tellingly, the editors reversed the historical order by presenting Elisha as Elijah's successor, in agreement with the overall biblical scheme of depicting Moses as the founder of monotheistic Yahwism. Reading the biblical text uncritically, the proponents of the early-monotheistic Yahwism paradigm (see Chapter 1) take the narrative sequence for the historical one, and thus misread the differences in the religious context of the Elisha and Elijah stories.

Though the Hebrew Bible sets the Elijah-Elisha cycle under the Omrides, at their earliest these stories reflect the depiction of the religious climate of the ensuing Jehu dynasty. In fact, the editors set Elisha's death during the reign of Jehu's grandson, Joash (2 Kgs 13.14–19).[16]

On the basis of the marriage of Ahab of Israel to the Sidonian princess, Jezebel (1 Kgs 16.31),[17] and their subsequent robust endorsement of Baalism, a strong case can be made for Baal-Shamem being the local manifestation of Baal

13. Simon J. DeVries, *1 Kings* (WBC 12; Waco: Word Books, 1985), xliii.

14. J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 254; W. Brian Aucker, "A Prophet in Kings Clothes: Kingly and Divine Re-Presentation in 2 Kings 4 and 5," in *Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honor of A. Graeme Auld* (SVT, 113; eds R. Rezetko et al.; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 1–2.

15. On the history of the cycle, see Hadi Ghantous, *The Elisha-Hazael Paradigm and the Kingdom of Israel* (Sheffield: Acumen, 2013), 125–32.

16. Miller and Hayes, *History of Ancient Israel*, 254.

17. Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings* (AB 10; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 421 contends that the king of the Sidonians in 1 Kgs 16.31 should be understood as a reflection of the expansion and supremacy of Tyre over Sidon.

polemicized against in the cycle.[18] In line with the notion that Moses was the founder of monotheistic Yahwism, the text suggests that the worship of Baal began in Israel only with the arrival of Jezebel at Samaria. Who was to head the Israelite pantheon is the question addressed in the Elijah-Elisha cycle. Presenting Baal as a late arrival on the Israelite scene gave Yahweh the legitimacy of a purported tradition going back to Moses (Exod. 6.3).

The avoidance of any mention of particular manifestations of Baal, be it the high god Baal/Hadad or regional variations of Baal, condemns all forms of Baalism and saves dealing with the issue that Yahweh could have been the Baal or "Lord" of Israel.

5.2.1 1 Kings 17

Elijah enters the section on the reign of Ahab abruptly with the proclamation of three years without any rain or dew, a drought which shall only end at his word (1 Kgs 17.1). The disaster is the consequence of the abominations committed by King Ahab listed in the previous chapter, among them his marriage with Jezebel the daughter of King Ethbaal, and the erection of a temple and altar for Baal in Samaria (1 Kgs 16.31–2).

The first words pronounced by Elijah put him in command of the jurisdiction of Baal's territory in his capacity as messenger of Yahweh. The narrative continues with miraculous episodes.

In the first one, Yahweh sends Elijah east of the Jordan. Meanwhile, the drought worsens. The second tale begins with Yahweh's word coming to the prophet and commanding him to travel to Zarephath, where a widow feeds him. As the widow is collecting wood to cook her last meal, it is clear that the drought decreed by Elijah is not limited to Israelite territory. It strikes at the heart of Baal's geographical domain, the city where Baalism is most prominent. Does Yahweh's jurisdiction extend beyond Israel's traditional territory?

The text indeed displays Yahweh's ability to order ravens to feed Elijah in the Transjordan plateau as well as multiplying a widow's flour and oil on the Phoenician coast.[19] Promising that Yahweh will not cease to provide food for the widow's household "until the day that Yahweh sends rain on the earth" (1 Kgs 17.14), Elijah proclaims in the heart of Baal's territory that Yahweh is in charge of the rain and thus of the fertility of the land. At this point, one should recall the Baal Cycle with its portrayal of Baal trapped in the underworld during the summer drought.

When Baal was in the throes of Mot and his realm below, the rain ceased because its sender was incapacitated. In Syro-Palestine, the lack of rain was interpreted as being the result of Baal's absence. By contrast, Yahweh is ever present

18. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 73–7; Cogan, *1 Kings*, 421.

19. On the repetition of Elijah and Elisha's miracles in the Gospels, see Philippe Guillaume, "Miracles Miraculously Repeated," *BN* 98 (1999): 21–3.

and, when droughts do occur, they are deemed punishment for the people's idolatry.

In the next story, the widow's son dies, or at least he had "no breath left in him," until he is revived by Elijah (1 Kings 17.17–24). In the parallel episode, Elisha raises the son of the Shunamite (2 Kgs 4.35). Other parallels to the episode of Elijah's dealings with the Zarephath widow include Elisha's help to a prophet's widow in satisfying a debt, by multiplying her provision of oil and preventing the creditor from taking her two sons (2 Kgs 4.7), and the feeding of a hundred people with twenty loaves (2 Kgs 4.43). While these passages do not mention Baal, they are part of the onslaught against Baal in the Elijah stories. The miraculous provisions of food present Yahweh as the master of the fertility of the land even during a famine when there is no rain. Baal is thus supplanted by Yahweh, in regard to fertility as well as to healing since one epithet of Baal at Ugarit is "healer," while the Epic of Aqhat has him bringing the dead to life (KTU 1.17.VI.30).[20]

5.2.2 1 Kings 18

After raising the son of the Zarephath widow, Elijah is on Mount Carmel for the most blatant polemic against Baal in the entire Hebrew Bible, the contest with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. The episode is introduced by a dialogue with Obadiah who complains that Elijah may be taken away, carried by the spirit of Yahweh "I know not where" (1 Kgs 18.12). Yahweh's "spirit" or "wind" (רוח) is another element associated with the storm-god.

In verse 23, Elijah outlines the parameters of the contest which will reveal Yahweh's appropriation of Baal's attributes. Two bulls shall be sacrificed, one for Baal and one for Yahweh. No fire is to be lit so that the god who answers by fire may be recognized as God. As Baal is not answering the pleas of his priests, Elijah evokes a crucial element of Baal mythology by suggesting that Baal may be asleep and must be awakened (1 Kgs 18.27). The cuts the priests inflict on themselves and their shouts to awaken Baal are said to follow the custom (כמשפטם) of Baal worship (1 Kgs 18.28). An Akkadian text found at Ugarit confirms the practice of self-laceration with ecstatic prophecy during burial rites.[21]

Finally, Yahweh answers Elijah's prayer, and lightning consumes the offering as well as the wood, the stones, the dust and even the water that was in the trench. The people conclude that "Yahweh is indeed God" (1 Kgs 18.39), completing the appropriation process.[22] Despite the slaughter of the prophets of Baal, rain comes

20. Leah Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha as Polemics against Baal Worship* (Pretoria Oriental Series 6; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 119–22.

21. J. J. M. Roberts, "A New Parallel to 1 Kings 18:28–29," *JBL* 89 (1970): 76–7. The women in Judges 11.37 lament the virginity of Jephthtah's daughter, but in real life they were meant to call the young fertility-god Dumuzi/Tammuz out of the underworld. See also Ezek. 8.14; Isa. 17.10-11 and Guillaume, *Waiting for Josiah*, 149–50.

22. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 76.

at the end of the chapter to display Yahweh's control over what was thought to be Baal's domain.

5.2.3 1 Kings 19

Continuing in this polemical cycle against Baal, in the immediately following chapter one reads of Elijah fleeing southward to Horeb to escape from Jezebel's threat to kill him. Elijah's flight southward to Mount Horeb, the opposite direction from Baal's mountain, Mount Zaphon, may be taken as polemic against Baal. Although he mobilizes a rock-splitting wind and an earthquake followed by fire, it is in a kind of whisper that Yahweh appears (1 Kgs 19.12). Yahweh's refusal to reveal himself in the wind, quaking and fire, all typical of theophanies of the storm-god, marks his difference.[23] Yahweh is not Baal. Yahweh appropriates Baal's domain and then transcends Baal.

5.2.4 2 Kings 1

Having succeeded his father Ahab on the throne of Israel, Ahaziah dies only two years later. Despite his good Yahwistic name, he is classified as an evil king who walked in the way of his father and mother and worshipped Baal (1 Kgs 22.52–3). To demonstrate the apostasy of the Omrides, 2 Kings 1 explains that having fallen through the lattice of his upper room Ahaziah dispatched messengers from Samaria to inquire of Baal-zebub, the God of Ekron. The four mentions of Baal-zebub in this chapter are the only instances of this name in the Hebrew Bible. *Zebub*, "flies" is a distortion of the name Baal-zebul, to mock this local manifestation of Baal.[24] Baal-zebul means "Baal the Prince."[25] Baal-zebul is attested at Ugarit as "*Zbl-bʿl*"[26] and is portrayed as a chthonic healer-god invoked "to drive away the demon of disease."[27] This underscores Baal's healing functions and the Rephaim as his envoys.

Three times Elijah intercepts Ahaziah's messengers, sending them back to the king with fatal words. Because he sent to inquire of Baal-zebub about the outcome of his illness, as though there were no god in Israel, Azariah shall not recover (2 Kgs 1.3, 6, 16). Explicit is the view that the king should have consulted Yahweh instead of Baal. Implicitly it is argued that Yahweh takes care of inquiries relating to healing.

In addition, this chapter also reveals Yahweh's command of fire from heaven. To prove that Elijah is a man of god (*Elohim*), lightning consumes a hundred soldiers,

23. Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 194.

24. M. Dietrich and O. Loretz, "Die Baʿal-Titel *bʿl ars* und *aliy qrdm*," *UF* 12 (1980): 391–93.

25. W. Herrmann, "Baal Zebub," *DDD*, 154–56.

26. Norman H. Snaith, *2 Kings* (New York: Abington Press, 1954), 189.

27. RIH I.16.1–3 and, possibly, KTU 1.82.38. See Herrmann, "Baal Zebub," 155.

appropriating again Baal's thunderbolts and healing powers while equating Yahweh with Elohim.

5.2.5 2 Kings 2

In 2 Kings 2 the focus shifts to the prophet Elisha, as Elijah ascends to heaven in verse 11. The polemic against Baal is less central in the Elisha stories than it is in the Elijah stories,[28] but the larger narrative context in which they have been set makes it clear that the onslaught on Baal continues.

Two glaring factors are indicative of usurpation of Baal in this chapter. The first is the whirlwind (סערה) and the chariot (רכב) which take Elijah into heaven (2 Kgs 2.11). The whirlwind belongs to the imagery of the storm-god, and Elijah's chariot of fire is a direct hint at Baal's designation as "rider of the clouds" at Ugarit.[29] Elisha's exclamation in verse 12 "Father, Father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen" and the other mention of horses and chariots of fire in 2 Kgs 2.17 allude to standard Baal mythological themes.

Water under the control of Yahweh's emissaries is the second factor indicative of a polemic in this chapter. Both Elijah and Elisha perform a miracle involving parting the waters. In verse 8, Elijah rolls up his mantle and uses it to split the Jordan. Elisha uses the same mantle and performs the same miracle, in verses 13 and 14, after Elijah has ascended to heaven. No doubt this served to illustrate that Elisha was the rightful successor of Elijah and of Moses (Exod. 14.16).[30] Besides the allusion to the Reed-Sea episode, these two partings of the Jordan recall Baal, who struck and conquered the god Nahar or "River Judge with his two weapons made for him by Kothar-wa-Hasis, the craftsman of the gods" (KTU 1.2.IV.22–8).[31] Yahweh's representative takes over Baal's control of the waters of chaos, represented as undulating lines over which Baal stands on the stele from Ugarit. This means that the parting of the Sea of Reeds by Moses and the parting of the waters of the Jordan by Joshua, Elijah and Elisha belong to this polemical motif, even though they also recall the splitting of Tiamat, the sea dragon of the Babylonian creation. The biblical writers may not have had access to Ugaritic

28. Yael Shemesh, "The Elisha Stories as Saints' Legends," *JHS* 8 (2008): 1–41. Available from: http//www.jhsonline.org

29. Green, *Storm-God*, 195.

30. Robert B. Coote, "Yahweh Recalls Elijah," in *Traditions in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith* (eds B. Halpern and J. D. Levenson; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 119. See also Hadi Ghantous, "From Mantle to Scroll: the Wane of the Flesh and Blood Prophet in the Elisha Cycle," in *Studies on Magic and Divination in the Biblical World* (eds H. R. Jacobus et al.; Piscataway, NY: Gorgias, 2013), 119–33 (126) who notes that the root גלם that describes what Elisha does to Elijah's mantle conveys the notion of "shearing" more than that of "rolling," evoking the transformation of the mantle into a parchment, a scroll prepared for the scriptorium, which implies the scripturalization of Yahweh's word.

31. Woods, *Water and Storm Polemics,* 105.

and Babylonian mythological texts as we do, but they were immersed in a world founded upon the mythological themes recorded in these texts.

Elisha's "healing" of foul water in verses 19–22 draws on the Moses template and thus shares a striking affinity with the story of Moses' sweetening of the bitter waters of Marah in Exodus 15.23–5.[32] On another level, the mention of healing (רפא) rather than purifying the waters of Jericho (2 Kgs 2.21–2) calls to mind the Rephaim (רפאים) associated with Baal (§4.7). The references to a prophet of Yahweh having control over water, healing and a probable allusion to the Rephaim in such a short space is too coincidental not to be a polemic revealing appropriation of Baal's functions.

5.2.6 2 Kings 3

Water is again a central theme in the next chapter, where one learns that Ahab's son, Jehoram, is now king over Israel. His twelve-year reign is deemed evil, though by comparison he was not as bad as his parents since he removed the *matsevot* his father had made for Baal (2 Kgs 3.2). The chapter goes on with the rebellion of King Mesha of Moab. On its way to subdue Moab, the coalition finds itself without water. King Jehoshaphat of Judah asks a rhetorical question "Is there no prophet of Yahweh here, through whom we may inquire of Yahweh?" that recalls Elijah's question to Ahaziah (compare 2 Kgs 1.3, 6, 16; and 2 Kgs 3.11). After another jab at Baal and his prophets (2 Kgs 3.13), Elisha eventually turns the dried wadi into pools of water, which saves the dehydrated army and fools the enemy, who thought they saw pools of blood. The text insists that Yahweh produced the water in spite of the absence of wind and rain (2 Kgs 3.17) to underline Yahweh's control of subterranean waters (see also Deuteronomy 33.13 and 2 Kings 4.44).

Elisha's request for a musician in verse 15 recalls a passage from the Story of Aqhat which "indicates that music is provided when Baal provides a drink" (KTU 1.17.VI.30–2).[33]

5.2.7 2 Kings 5

Another explicit polemic can be observed in the story of Naaman, the commander of the army of Aram, and his encounter with Elisha, which leads to his leprosy being cured.

The chapter begins by praising the Aramean commander in a universalistic and monotheistic tone, for the reader is told that Yahweh had given victory to

32. T. R. Hobbs, *2 Kings* (WBC 13; Waco: Word Books, 1985), 37. That the miracle is performed by the word of Yahweh and not by the word of Moses confirms the notion of scripturalization: see Ghantous, "From Mantle to Scroll," 127.

33. Woods, *Water and Storm Polemics*, 107 citing James K. Battenfield, "YHWH's Refutation of the Baal Myth through the Actions of Elijah and Elisha," in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison* (ed. A. Gileadi; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 28; but see the different translation by Wyatt, *Religious Texts*, 273.

Aram through Naaman. Likewise, after his healing Naaman asserts "I know there is no God in all the earth except in Israel" (2 Kgs 5.15). Nevertheless, Naaman requests the right to enter the temple of Rimmon as part of his duties (2 Kgs 5.18). Rimmon means "thunder" and was an epithet of Hadad,[34] the Aramean storm-god. Naaman, in effect, becomes a proselyte.[35]

This episode extends the anti-Baal polemic to Hadad. After the integration of the Lebanese coast (1 Kgs 17.9) and Transjordan (2 Kgs 3.8) into Yahweh's geographic domain, this text proclaims Yahweh rule over Damascus by stating that Yahweh used Aram to chastise Israel (1 Kgs 5.1).[36] In light of the refrain of the so-called Book of Saviors in Judges 3–9,[37] Yahweh made Naaman victorious over Israel to punish Israel for the worship of Baal. The healing of Naaman displays the appropriation of Baal/Hadad's healing abilities.

5.2.8 2 Kings 7

A captain of the king of Israel questions Elisha on an oracle, asking: "Even if Yahweh were to make windows in the sky, could such a thing happen?" (2 Kgs 7.2). The narrator repeats the question in 2 Kings 7.19, explaining that what the prophet predicted did come to fruition. It should be remembered that Baal requested a window to be built in his palace in the Baal Cycle and that Kothar-wa-Hasis subsequently built one for him (§4.4.2). This window is to let the rain water the crops. The context of a bitter famine decreed by Yahweh in which 2 Kings 7 sets the reminiscence of Baal's window in the sky makes the polemic against the storm-god all the more biting.[38]

5.2.9 2 Kings 10–11

Jehu's tearing down of the temple of Baal, the burning of Baal's stelae and the slaughter of Baal's worshippers (2 Kgs 10.18–28) reveal Baal's impotence to protect his worshippers and his temple. The struggle against Baal reaches its climax at this point of the narrative with the end of the house of Ahab and Jezebel's violent death: the two paramount worshippers of Baal. The eradication of Baalism continues with the destruction of a temple of Baal in Jerusalem (2 Kgs 11.17–18).

5.2.10 2 Kings 13

There are no clear cases of anti-Baal polemic revealing appropriation on the part of Yahweh in the remainder of the Cycle, save the death of Elisha which closes the

34. Greenfield, "Hadad," 379; Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *2 Kings* (AB 11; New York: Doubleday, 1988), 65; Snaith, *2 Kings*, 213; Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 66.

35. Cogan and Tadmor, *2 Kings*, 67.

36. See Ghantous, *Elisha-Hazael Paradigm*.

37. See Guillaume, *Waiting for Josiah*, 3–15.

38. Woods, *Water and Storm Polemics*, 110–11.

cycle (2 Kgs 13.20–2). The resuscitation of a dead man who was thrown in haste in Elisha's grave completes the appropriation of Baal's rule over the Rephaim. Contrary to Baal, Yahweh need not absent himself and descend to the underworld in order to heal. He can heal by using the bones of his prophet years after the prophet's death.

5.2.11 Recapitulation

Elijah's contest with four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18), the resurrection of a child by both prophets (1 Kgs 17.17–24; 2 Kgs 4.8–37), Elijah's control of the rain and dew (1 Kgs 17), Elijah's flight to Horeb and the theophany there (1 Kgs 19), Elijah's calling down fire from God while contending with Ahaziah (2 Kgs 1), the parting of the Jordan and the chariot of fire (2 Kgs 2.1–18), the healing of Naaman (2 Kgs 5) and Elisha's bones causing the resurrection of another person (2 Kgs 13.21) are the main episodes which reveal Yahweh's appropriation of Baal's domain.

All in all, the Elijah cycle is a most violent indictment of Baal. John Day has accused other scholars of increasing "the number of passages in the Elijah and Elisha stories which are to be envisaged as displaying polemic against the Baal cult" beyond the evidence.[39] The above selection of polemical passages suggests, rather, that the entire cycle is ostensibly aimed at all forms of Baalism, Hadad as much as every local manifestation of the storm-god, Baal-zebul, Baal Saphon or Baal Shamem.

The names of the two protagonists answer the central question of the Elijah-Elisha cycle: Who is god, Baal or Yahweh? "Elijah" means "my god is Yah(u)," a shortened form of Yahweh. Elisha, which means "El/god is salvation," is also appropriate for Elijah's successor.

One should note, however, that the last king of the Omride dynasty, Ahaziah, bears an equally Yahwistic name. He is nevertheless condemned (2 Kings 1); but his Yahwistic name is a clue that the Baalism of the Omride dynasty involved no rejection of Yahweh. Contrary to its depiction as such in the Elijah-Elisha cycle, the Omrides were not abandoning Yahweh and following other gods when they rendered a cult to Baal their Lord since they probably used the name "Baal" as a title for Yahweh (§7.5.1). Noticeably absent from the cycle are explicit polemics against Asherah. The significance of this absence is discussed in Chapter 7.

5.3 Samuel's Farewell Speech

In contrast to the Elijah-Elisha cycle, Samuel's farewell speech in 1 Samuel 12 mentions both the baalim *and* the ashtaroth (1 Sam. 12.10–11), rendering the objects of the polemic explicit. Samuel's critique of kingship is validated by the production of voices and rain (ויתן קלת ומטר) performed by Yahweh at the time

39. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 77.

of the wheat harvest when it is not expected (1 Sam. 12.16–18), thus manifesting his control of rain and thunder.

Samuel's designation in 1 Samuel 12.21 of the gods that the Israelites worshipped every time they abandoned Yahweh as "nothingness" (תהו) alludes to the underworld, the *Tehom* into which Baal descended every summer.

5.4 *The Sin of Shittim*

Another sharp polemic against Baal is displayed in the episode of Israel's sin at Shittim, presented as the worship of the gods of the daughters of Moab (Num. 25.1). Verse 3 explains that "Israel yoked itself to the Baal of Peor." Those are executed by the judges of Israel (Num. 25.5) and/or by a plague that stopped when Phinehas speared Zimri and Cozbi (Num. 25.8, 18). The sending of the plague and its termination place Yahweh in full command of another of Baal's domain who is depicted as a smiting god.[40]

5.5 *Ishbosheth*

In the passages relating David's rise to power, the name of Saul's son, Ishbaal, is changed eleven times into Ishbosheth "man of shame," while 1 Chronicles 8.33; 9.39 preserves the original reading of the name.[41] Though the biblical text does not suggest that Saul's son, or any member of his family for that matter, worshipped Baal,[42] a later scribe chose to turn this theophoric element into the derogatory term meaning "shame," as is also the case in 2 Samuel 4.4; Jeremiah 3.24; 11.13; Hosea 9.10. As mentioned of Ahaziah (§5.2.11), the use of both Yahweh and Baal elements in royal names supports the notion that, in Israel at least, Baal was used as a title for Yahweh rather than as a reference to the worship of another god. That a Judean scribe felt the need to change Ishbaal's name is obviously a deliberate stab at Baal, but it also shows how hard it was to convince the readership that "Baal" was not a title for Yahweh.

40. See *ANEP*, figs 501, 519, 520, 521, 532, 533, 537, 538, 651, 703; D. J. A. Clines, *Job 21–37* (WBC 18A; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 873.

41. Dearman, "Baal in Israel," 188; Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 81–3.

42. In fact, "baal" here may be understood as an epithet for Yahweh; see Helmer Ringgren, *Israelite Religion* (trans. D. Green; London: SPCK, 1969), 44; Jeremy M. Hutton, "Southern, Northern and Transjordanian Perspectives," in *Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel*, (eds F. Stavrakopoulou and J. Barton; London; T&T Clarke, 2010), 155.

5.6 Psalm 29

Psalm 29 was originally a hymn written for Baal and later appropriated for Yahwistic use.[43] This psalm is set in the heavenly council where the other members of the pantheon called the sons of god (בני אלים) are invited to glorify Yahweh (v. 1). Apart from the glory of Yahweh's name (כבוד שמו) in verse 2, which uses Shem and Kabod theology and may reflect a later hand,[44] the next verses list Yahweh's attributes, most of them standard storm-god images in Ugaritic epics.[45] His voice (קול) is mentioned seven times, each time evoking thunder. His voice is powerful, it breaks cedars, it flashes in thunder, it shakes the wilderness and it strips the forest bare (vv. 3-9). In verse 6, Baal's attributive animal is twice mentioned: Yahweh's thunder makes Lebanon skip like a calf and Sirion like a young wild ox. Baal's victory over Yam at Ugarit is evoked in verse 10 as Yahweh's rule over the flood (מבול).

The focus is on the northern parts of the Levant where Baal was most prominent: Lebanon, Sirion[46] and Kadesh on the Orontes[47] (vv. 6, 8). This geographical frame does not necessarily indicate the origin of the hymn,[48] but it certainly shows Yahweh's control of the northern Levant. The concluding plea that Yahweh might give strength to his people evidences the appropriation of Baal in his capacity of warrior and smiting deity.

Although Baal is never mentioned, the amount of storm-god imagery in this short psalm confirms its polemical stance. The hymn is more than praise of Yahweh depicted as a storm-god. Rather than inviting Israel to praise Yahweh, it is the entire assembly of the sons of god which is called upon to recognize

43. Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I, 1–50* (AB 16; New York: Doubleday, 1965), 175; Day, "Echoes of Baal's Seven Thunders," 143; Martin Rose, "Names of God in the OT," *ABD* IV, 1007; James M. Trotter, *Reading Hosea in Achaemenid Yehud* (JSOTS, 328; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 127.

44. See Diana Edelman, "God Rhetoric: Reconceptualizing YHWH Sebaot as YHWH Elohim in the Hebrew Bible," in *A Palimpsest: Rhetoric, Ideology, Stylistics, and Language Relating to Persian Israel* (eds E. Ben Zvi, D. Edelman and F. Polak; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009), 93–120; Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies* (ConBOT 18; CWK Gleerup, 1982); H. Niehr, "In Search of YHWH's Cult Statue in the First Temple," in *The Image and the Book* (ed. K. van der Toorn; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 73–95.

45. Day, "Echoes of Baal's Seven Thunders," 143.

46. Mount Hermon in the Anti-Lebanon range according to Patrick D. Miller, "Psalms," in *The HarperCollins Study Bible* (ed. W. A. Meeks; New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 797–937 (825). Yohanan Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography* (trans. A. F. Rainey; 2nd rev. and enl. edn; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), 65 presupposes that Mount Hermon and Sirion were two separate mountains.

47. So Dahood, *Psalms 1–50*, 178.

48. Against Walter Gerhardt, Jr., "The Hebrew/Israelite Weather-Deity," *Numen* 13 (1966): 139.

Yahweh's primacy. The scribes who appropriated a hymn to the storm-god were obviously not hoping to add a title to the repertoire of the heavenly choir. Their aim was down-to-earth. As Baal was one of the sons of god as much as Yahweh, Psalm 29 displays Baal singing Yahweh's praises very much as the members of the Ugaritic pantheon celebrated the inauguration of Baal's palace on Mount Zaphon (§4.4.2). Such an elaborate rhetorical device would have been meaningless had this Psalmist considered Baal as a mere title for Yahweh.

5.7 The Song of Moses

The Song of Moses is a poem embedded in a narrative. Presented as the words of a song recited by Moses himself (Deut. 31.30), the chapter begins with some imagery of fertility: "May my teaching drop like the rain, my speech condense like the dew; like gentle rain on grass, like showers on new growth" (Deut. 32.2). This is standard storm-god imagery associated with Yahweh.

The same register is evoked in verses 12–13, where Yahweh alone, "and there was no foreign god with him!" (ואין עמו אל נכר), drove Israel in a chariot (ירכבהו) on a high land and fed him delicacies. Again, this passage is riddled with attributes that, at Ugarit, belong to Baal. The rider upon the clouds provides his people with every produce of the land: honey, oil, curds, milk, meat, wheat, wine (vv. 13–14). Verses 19 and 20 extend Yahweh's domain to Sheol, and his fiery wrath reaches the foundation of the mountains. Hence, Baal is not alone in going down to the underworld. Yahweh also shoots arrows at his enemies (vv. 23 and 42). As a smiting-god, he raises his hand to strike with his flashing sword (v. 41). The gods who ate the sacrifices offered by his idolatrous servants offer no protection against Yahweh's vengeful anger (vv. 37–8). Monotheism bursts out triumphant in verse 39: "I, Yahweh, I am He and there is no god(s) besides me." Hence, it is Yahweh who both kills and brings to life, who wounds and heals: precisely Baal's duties at Ugarit.

Within these triumphal monotheistic affirmations, Deuteronomy 32.8–9 explains how Elyon organized the sons of Adam into distinct peoples, and set the boundaries of the territory allotted to each people according to the number of the sons of El. Yahweh received Jacob as his lot. In the received Hebrew text, the sons of El have been turned into "sons of Israel" (ישׂראל < אל), a reading that spoils the logic of the text but erases the pantheon implied by the notion that El has many sons. That the reading "sons of Israel" is an emendation of "sons of El" is confirmed by texts found near Qumran, and by the Septuagint which reads ἀγγέλων θεοῦ, rendered in the New English Translation of the Septuagint as "divine sons."[49] The Alexandrian translators either had too much respect for the Hebrew text they worked on, or they reconciled with monotheism the idea that Yahweh was a subordinate deity among others in the pantheon ruled by the "Most

49. *NETS*, 170.

High" by understanding Elyon as a synonym for Yahweh.[50] In any case, the text does not make any sense in the context of a song that pictures Yahweh not only as the head of the pantheon but also as the sole and only god. It was only as one of the sons of the "godfather" that Yahweh received Jacob as his people and Israel as his allotted territory. Or he should have received the entire world and every people as his inheritance, thus rendering the notion of careful apportionment superfluous.

Verse 43 indeed implies that all people are his people, but the analysis of some manuscripts from Qumran, and some versions, shows that verse 43 was even more heavily edited than verse 8. An approximate reconstruction of the modifications introduced in the present form of the Masoretic text indicates that the present phrase, "Praise, o nations his people," previously read, "Praise, o heavens." In the final version, the nations (גוים), implying all of them, are his people (*'amo*), but a previous form of the text invited the heavens to join *with* his people (*'im 'amo*) in praise before calling all the gods, or the sons of El, to render obedience to Yahweh.[51]

Although Baal is never named, the amount of storm-god imagery shows that it is largely Baal's domain which is concerned. The polemical stance is clear in the designation of Yahweh's rivals as "strange gods… demons, not God, deities they had never known." The description continues with an explanation that these ungodly gods were new, they had recently arrived, and Israel's ancestors had not feared them (Deut. 32.6-7). The reality in ancient Israel was probably quite different. The worship of a small pantheon headed by Yahweh would have reflected traditional religion. So it was fitting to have the mythological founder of monotheism claim that the gods worshipped by Israel's fathers were idols recently arrived on the scene, thus establishing the credentials of the early-monotheistic Yahwism paradigm discussed in Chapter 1.

5.8 The Song of David

Another poem embedded in a narrative is 2 Samuel 22, said to be sung by David when Yahweh delivered him from the hand of Saul. It is also preserved in Psalm 18 with minor variations. It is a conspicuous example of appropriation on the part of Yahweh, but one must ask whether this represents a polemic. Yahweh's theophany in the hymn is consistent with that of a storm-god, and there are many instances of usurpation of Baal's realm.

Verse 6 explicitly mentions Sheol, a locale which played an important role in the mythology of Baal (§4.7). Then, the theophany in verses 8–16 involves an

50. See Smith, *Origins*; Smith, *Memoirs of God*, 152; Smith, *God in Translation*, 195–212, where the textual variants can be found.

51. See the critical apparatus of the *BHS*. The *NETS* translates: "Be glad, O skies, with him, and let all the divine sons do obeisance to him."

earthquake, fire, smoke, thunder, waters, darkness, clouds and riding on a cherub, all stock storm-god motifs.

One important element of Baal imagery is lost in translation. For instance, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) renders verse 30 as: "By you I can crush a troop, and by my God I can leap over a *wall*." The translation of the word *shur* (שׁור) as a "wall" is unwarranted but it reflects the powerful influence biblical monotheism has over bible translators, who cannot figure David leaping over a bull, the animal associated with Baal, and with the infamous golden calf, despite the wide attestation of bull-leaping iconography in the Levant.[52]

Then, the motif of Baal's yearly descent into the underworld is hinted at in the statement, "Yahweh lives," of verse 47, which insists that, contrary to Baal, Yahweh never dies only to be revived and arise from the underworld with the arrival of the first rains in late autumn.

Baal is not named, but the "torrents of worthlessness" (נחלי בליעל) use the term *beliʿal* which is a likely pun on the name *baʿal,* enough to add 2 Samuel 22 to the list of anti-Baal polemic. That this psalm is sung upon the death of the founder of a kingdom systematically described as a hot-bed of Baalism is particularly ironic.

5.9 Prophetic Texts

A paradigm shift is currently under way in the study of prophetic literature in the Hebrew Bible, as it is now clear that there are no parallels to the prophetic books of the Bible in the ancient world.[53] The Mari prophecies do not come close to approximating the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible; they are not a unified collection devoted to a single deity. They are scattered on different tablets and are short prophecies, generally addressed to the king, not a people, as in the Hebrew Bible.

The longstanding Protestant model, based on the model of Jesus and his disciples, of a prophet roaming the countryside with a band of disciples copying down his words, is an anachronism much in need of revision. A more likely scenario is that prophecies from a variety of different types of prophetic functionaries were collected in temples, such as at Bethel and Mizpah, and a later scribal-elite class edited together parts of the collections, based on a particular

52. See Philippe Guillaume, "Bull-Leaping in Psalm 18," in *Metaphors in the Psalms* (eds P. Van Hecke and A. Labahn; BETL, 23; Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 35–46.

53. Diana Edelman, "From Prophets to Prophetic Books: Fixing the Divine Word," in *The Production of Prophecy: Constructing Prophecy and Prophets in Yehud* (eds Ehud Ben Zvi and Diana Edelman; London: Equinox, 2009), 29–54; Niels Peter Lemche, "The God of Hosea," in *Priests, Prophets and Scribes: Essays on the Formation and Heritage of Second Temple Judaism in Honor of Joseph Blenkinsopp* (JSOTS, 149; eds Eugene Ulrich et al.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 242.

ideology and for a particular purpose.[54] Perhaps the Mari prophecies are what the prophecies in the Hebrew Bible originally looked like before they were edited together. The process of editing consisted of selecting which oracles to include, collecting prophecies from different origins and periods, and attributing them to a single figure.[55]

After a scroll had come into existence, scribes, in the process of copying, added expansions and emendations.[56] The present form of our prophetic collections is the result of the collecting of short prophecies into a scroll in support of a particular ideological, political and economic agenda, as well as later additions to the original collection.

Hence, the original agenda of each prophetic book is very difficult to pin down. What is clear is the overarching theme running throughout the prophetic books in their present form. It explains the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by Yahweh. Yahweh brought foreigners to punish those of his people who worshipped other gods, in particular Baal.

This means that much of the formation of prophetic literature occurred after 586 BCE, the date of the destruction of the Temple. As this prophetic message also served to warn the people of the danger of disobeying Yahweh, it served to control behavior in the future. It intended to make the people see the grave importance of worshipping one god, and it served to uphold, or retain in power, an elite priestly class. This argues in favor of dating the final form of the majority of the Hebrew Bible's prophetic compositions to the Persian period at the earliest, with some activity going on into the early Hellenistic period. Daniel, at least, is a Hellenistic period text, and parts of it date to Maccabean times, around 165 BCE.

5.9.1 Hosea

More than any other book, Hosea addresses Baalism. As a collection emanating from the Northern Kingdom, Hosea could represent the struggle between Yahweh and Baal for the head of the pantheon rather than a struggle for monotheistic Yahwism advocating the position that only Yahweh existed. It was a struggle over who would assume the position of the head of the pantheon.[57] Later, in Achaemenid Yehud, Hosea's scathing attacks of Baal would have been used for a more general condemnation of practices that deviated from strict monotheistic Yahwism. Whether or not El was included in the polemic remains open.[58]

54. Edelman, "Prophets to Prophetic Books," 29–54.

55. See Philip R. Davies, "'Pen of Iron, Point of Diamond' (Jer. 17.1): Prophecy as Writing," in *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy* (eds E. Ben Zvi and M. H. Floyd; SBLSS 10; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2000), 65–81.

56. Hugh S. Pyper, "Reading in the Dark: Zechariah, Daniel and the Difficulty of Scripture," *JSOT* 29 (2005): 485–504.

57. Trotter, *Hosea in Achaemenid Yehud*, 164.

58. R. Scott Chalmers, "Who is the Real El? A Reconstruction of the Prophet's Polemic in Hosea 12:5a," *CBQ* 68 (2006): 611–30 suggests that Hosea contains a polemic against the

The offensive metaphor of the unfaithful wife at the beginning of Hosea contains several examples of polemics revealing appropriation. Hosea 2.10 (Eng. 8) reads, "She did not *know* that it was I who gave her the grain (דגן), the wine, and the oil, and who lavished upon her silver and gold that they used for Baal." This line claims that Yahweh rather than Baal is responsible for the fertility of the land. The Hebrew word for grain in this text is the same as that used for the deity Dagon, a deity who specifically presided over grain production, but who was also believed to be the father of Baal. As the verse closes with a mention of Baal, insisting that it is Yahweh who provided the silver and the gold they lavished on Baal (literally, "he multiplied the silver and gold they made for Baal"), the polemic against Baal and his father is explicit.

The polemic continues in Hosea 2.15 (Eng. 13) with the announced punishment for the festival days of the baals. When Israel will be reconciled with Yahweh, Yahweh promises to dispense the grain, wine and oil (Hos. 2.23–4; Eng. 21–2), using fertility metaphors. As the storm-god, Yahweh's answer to the heavens, which in turn shall answer the land, which will then answer with food, draws more on the sexual, i.e. reproductive, meaning of the root ענה than the translations suggest. Yahweh rains seeds and in Hosea 2.25 (Eng. 23) Yahweh states that he will do the fertilization himself (זרעתיה לי). Similarly, in Hosea 6.3, Madam Israel states that Yahweh will "enter us (יבוא לנו) like showers, like the spring rains water the land."

Besides the theme of fertility and fertilization that runs through the first chapters of Hosea, Yahweh's attack on Baal's healing and revivifying abilities is visible in the invitation to Israel to return to Yahweh who will revive her after two days and raise her up after three days (Hos. 6.1–2). Being raised up on the third day belongs to the mythology of Baal who, upon leaving the netherworld every year, took with him the prominent dead.[59] The polemical appropriation of healing appears in Hosea 14.5 (Eng. 14.4) where Yahweh promises to heal (רפא) Israel's apostasy.

In Hosea 8.5–6, the calf of Samaria is rejected "for an artisan made it and it is not a god (*Elohim*)." Whatever the relation of the calf of Samaria with Jeroboam, Hosea 10.5 has the plural "calves," when it mentions that the inhabitants of Samaria tremble for the calves of Beth-aven. Baal is not mentioned there, but apostasy leads to a famine caused by wind and whirlwind that make the sowing fail (Hos. 8.7).

Baal-peor is named in Hosea 9.10. Israel's ancestors came to Baal-peor and consecrated themselves to *the* shame (לַבשת). In light of the alterations of the

worship of El at Bethel. Hosea needed to show that Yahweh was responsible for what was ascribed to El. For Chalmers, Hosea addressed a case of mistaken identity. At least since Otto Eissfeldt, "El and Yahweh," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 1 (1956): 25–37, it has generally been assumed that there is no polemic against El in the Hebrew Bible. See also Smith, *The Early History of God*, 33.

59. Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 276. But Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 121–2 sees the third day as "a poetic way of saying 'after a short while.'"

name "Baal" into "boshet" in the name of Ishbaal in 2 Samuel 2–4 (§5.5), it comes as no surprise that Baal-peor is deemed a shameful divinity. While the received text lets Baal-peor be interpreted as a place name,[60] the memory of Peor cannot be isolated from the incident at the end of the wilderness journey in Numbers 25 when Israel's fathers venerated Baal.

Besides the indictment of Baal-peor, the mention of wombs and children in the following verses constitutes an implicit polemic against Baal, Asherah and El (Hos. 9.11–14), the anonymity of the attack allowing one to bundle them together.[61]

Baal's healing powers are also appropriated in Hos. 11.2–3 where, after a denunciation of Israel's worship of the *Baalim*, Yahweh claims to have taught Ephraim to walk, "and yet they did not know that I healed them." Though these verses do not name Yahweh, the context makes it certain that he is the intended subject. In verse 4, Yahweh states, "I bent down to them and fed them," yet another function the ancients attributed to a deity presiding over fertility of the land. Therefore, this polemical text removes healing and feeding from Baal's domain and places these functions among Yahweh's responsibilities.

Hosea 13 recapitulates the book's indictment of Baal. Baal worship killed Ephraim (Hos. 13.1), but they kept on sinning and casting idols, they kissed calves! (Hos. 13.2, see Exod. 32.4, 8 and Deut. 9.16).[62] Behind the calf stands Baal.

Though the MT of Hos. 13.5 explains that it was Yahweh who knew the people when they were in the wilderness, echoing the Exodus tradition mentioned in verse 4, the LXX preserves an older reading, feeding in place of knowing. This other text reads, "It was I who fed you in the wilderness, in the land of drought," reiterating Yahweh's appropriation of storm-god on the heels of the condemnation of Baal. Hosea 14.6 (Eng. 14.5) then speaks of Yahweh's being like the dew for Israel.

To conclude this overview of the Book of Hosea: it is clear that the polemics are aimed at Baal's healing powers and his role in the fertility of the land and of people.

5.9.2 Jeremiah

Turning to Jeremiah, some polemical appropriation is found in chapter 23. Twice, the chapter explicitly condemns Baal, and in each instance the condemnation is followed by a portrayal of Yahweh in terms normally used for Baal. The first example terms as "a disgusting thing" (תפלה Jer. 23.13) oracles proffered in the name of Baal. The appropriation follows in verses 18–19. After the rhetorical

60. So, for example, Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea* (AB 24; New York: Doubleday, 1980), 540.

61. But Johannes C. de Moor, "El, The Creator," in *The Bible World* (eds G. Rendsburg *et al.*; New York: KTAV Publishing, 1980), 171–87 (173) argues that at Ugarit Baal does not oversee child bearing, this being chiefly the domain of El.

62. Douglas Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah* (WBC 31; Waco: Word Books, 1987), 202.

question, "who has stood in the council of Yahweh?," the audience is invited to consider the "storm of Yahweh," which expresses his wrath in a "whirling tempest." Again, these were typical attributes of Baal at Ugarit.

The second instance is found in Jeremiah 23.27–9, where the accusation against Israel's fathers for having forgotten Yahweh's name for Baal serves as the background for the condemnation of the prophets who are trying to do the same. To prove his superiority, Yahweh calls upon typical storm-god traits, insisting that his word is like fire, and that as a hammer it can break a rock to pieces. Had he always been conceived as a storm-god, the polemic against Baal would be superfluous.

5.9.3 Habakkuk 3

The vision of Habakkuk (Hab. 3.3–15) recalls the memory of Yahweh's southern origins, this time from Teman.[63] Although the rays flashing from his hand are paired with a sun-like brightness, they evoke Baal's thunderbolts rather than the sun-god.[64] Verse 5 adds Resheph (plague) and Deber (pestilence) to Yahweh's retinue. Plague and pestilence reflect Baal mythology since Resheph is attested together with Baal at Ugarit.[65]

Baal's court is further plundered in verse 8 with the mention of rivers (נהרים) and the sea as possible objects of Yahweh's wrath when he rode his chariot and horses to victory. At Ugarit, Yam, whom Baal defeats in part I of the Baal Cycle, is also called Nahar.[66] Rivers and Sea are used in parallel here as they are in KTU 1.2.IV, a reference to Baal's battle against the powers of chaos. The chariot evokes Baal's title as rider upon the clouds (*rkb.ʿrpt*), which appears on the same tablet (KTU 1.2.IV.8). The bow, arrows and flashing spear in verses 9 and 11 belong to the same register. The theophany concludes with Yahweh's trampling the mighty sea with his horses, completing the supplanting of Baal (Hab. 3.15).

The enumeration of passages using storm-god imagery could go on, but the examples discussed in this chapter should be more than enough to show that in many instances storm-god motifs appear within explicitly anti-Baal polemics. Hence, Yahweh in storm-god garb was no matter-of-fact manner to portray him. To the intended audience, storm-god imagery belonged to Baal, and it was felt necessary to openly disqualify the god Baal before storm-god traits could be safely transferred onto Yahweh. Why it was so is placed in historical perspective in Chapter 7.

63. So Benjamin Mazar, "Yahweh Came out from Sinai," in *Temples and High Places in Biblical Times* (Jerusalem: Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology of Hebrew Union College & Jewish Institute of Religion, 1981), 5–9.

64. Nili Shupak, "The God from Teman and the Egyptian Sun God: A Reconsideration of Habakkuk 3:3–7," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 28 (2001): 97–116.

65. See the "Ugaritic Liturgy against Venomous Reptiles," trans. Dennis Pardee (*COS* 1.94.295–8) and Smith, *Origins*, 47–8; Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 199–201.

66. Green, *Storm-God*, 179–81.

Chapter 6

Appropriation through Implied Polemics and Non-Polemical Transference

Implied polemics and non-polemical transference texts are the categories which complete the appropriation typology delineated in Chapter 3. Obviously, these are more difficult to identify than explicit polemics. Without the extensive documentation from Ugarit, it would be impossible to distinguish traits typically associated with the figures of Baal, Asherah or El, and it could be argued that these traits belonged to Yahweh's original portrayal.

Moreover, ambiguity often arises as to whether a text should be categorized as an implied polemic or as a non-polemical transference text. In fact, non-polemical transference texts and implied polemics are often found together and there is no reason to deal with them in separate chapters.

Contrary to explicit polemics, implied polemical texts do not name the divinity whose domain they appropriate for Yahweh. They operate with clues, and several clues must be identified to confirm the presence of an implicit polemic.

Non-polemical transference texts ascribe to Yahweh traits or duties that we know, mostly from Ugaritic texts, were under the care of another deity. The assumption here is that before the rise of strict monotheism Israelites and Judahites ascribed the traits in question to other gods than Yahweh. Naturally, the Hebrew Bible, as it now stands, assumes that it was always Yahweh, and no other, who was endowed with the traits he is shown to possess. The final product should not be taken for the original ingredient, as tend to do the proponents of the early-monotheistic Yahwism model (Chapter 1). The presence of an agenda seeking to prove that Yahweh is the one and only storm-god indicates the existence of an ideological struggle with other theological positions. For this reason, biblical texts cannot be taken at face value.

As it is rarely possible to disentangle the different layers that compose a biblical passage, Chapter 7 will use the likely differences in the portrayals of Yahweh in Jerusalem and in Samaria, broadly speaking during monarchic times (ninth to sixth century BCE), to map out the rise of Yahwism without resorting to standard text-critical scrutiny. In the meantime, this chapter presents a selection of biblical texts that illustrate the categories of implied polemics and non-polemical transference of traits that, according to Ugaritic texts, belonged to Baal, El and Asherah.

6.1 Baal Imagery

6.1.1 Storm, Thunder and Cloud

Societies in the ancient Near East probably venerated only one storm-god at a time. This is most likely for groups in peripheral areas such as Israel and, even more so, Judah, which occupied regions with less economic potential than the coastal kingdoms and the Mesopotamian empires. Whether it was a reflection of the human family or a mirror of earthly bureaucratic structures, the size of any pantheon was by necessity determined by wealth and by the size of the territory controlled by any given entity.[1] Hence, it is safe to assume that only a handful of gods were worshipped in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. This was still the case at Elephantine around 400 BCE.[2]

At Ugarit as much as in the Bible, the violence of Mediterranean storms which accompany the bulk of the yearly rainfall and their remarkably short duration are considered as manifestations of the storm-god. The description of storms involves pyrotechnical vocabulary:

> Baal uttered his holy voice,
> Echoed the issue of his lips,
> His holy voice rocked the earth,
> …
> The high places of the earth shook;
> Baal's enemies took to the woods,
> Hadad's foes to the hillsides.[3]

Likewise, biblical theophanies evoke Yahweh's thundering voice (Job 37.1–5; 1 Sam. 2.10) which routs the Philistines (1 Sam. 7.10b) and shakes the earth (Judg. 5.4–5). As Baal is not mentioned in these texts, and there are no other clues to support the presence of implied polemics, these instances of storm-god imagery correspond to non-polemical transference, unless for those who composed the poems Yahweh was a storm-god. In this case, no transference was at play, at least not consciously so.

In some cases, however, the portrayal of Yahweh includes some far more pointed references. Baal's epithet *rkb.ʿrpt* "rider of the clouds," attested (so far) sixteen times at Ugarit,[4] is found word-for-word (רכב בערבות) in Ps. 68.5 (Eng. 4),[5] in similar forms in Psalm 104.3 (עבים רכובו) and in Isa. 19.1 (רכב על עב).

1. Smith, "When the Heaven," 265–77; Handy, *Host of Heaven.*

2. van der Toorn, "Anat-Yahu," 80–101.

3. Marvin H. Pope, *Job* (AB 15; 3rd edn; New York: Doubleday, 1965–73), 279.

4. Green, *Storm-God*, 195.

5. The *p/b* change is interpreted as a "deliberate distortion of the epithet *rkb ʿrpt*" from Ugarit in Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 92–3, but this interchange is too common to warrant such a view. That the word ערבה also means "steppe" (HALOT 2.880) does not make the reading "clouds" in Ps. 68.5 incorrect. See W. Herrmann, "Rider upon the clouds," *DDD*, 703–5.

Commentators have long seen this as a taking over of the standard description of the Canaan storm-god.[6]

The Tetragrammaton appears only twice in Psalm 68, a faithful reflection of the overall picture in the Elohistic Psalter, where the name "Yahweh" appears forty-two times in the forty-two psalms (Pss. 42–83) of this collection.[7] To obtain this ratio, the scribes may have replaced the Tetragrammaton with other names such as *Adonai* and *Yah*, but they brought some particular verses to the fore by placing or leaving in them occurrences of Yahweh. In Psalm 68, verse 17 (Eng. 16) is thus foregrounded: "Why do you look with envy, O many-peaked mountains, at the mount that God desired for his abode, where *Yahweh* will reside forever?" Yahweh's name also occurs in verse 27 (Eng. 26): "Bless God in the great congregation, *Yahweh,* O you who are of Israel's fountain!" As the *BHS* notes, many manuscripts have אדני instead of יהוה in verse 27, so the case of this benediction is less clear and the emphasis falls on the envious mountains in verse 17. Verse 30 (Eng. 29) specifies the object of their jealousy as the temple over (על) Jerusalem. Among the "many-peaked mountains"[8] which look with envy at Yahweh's eternal abode, Bashan is named in verse 16, but the plural הרים ("mountains"), usually lost in translations due to the parallel in verse 16, suggests other candidates as well: the rival sanctuary on Mount Gerizim and/or Mount Saphon, the abode of the Cloud-rider mentioned in verse 5. As one of the mountains envying Jerusalem, Saphon produces an artful transference of Baal's domain. The polemic is implicit, but the tone is sharp.

The polemic is less obvious in Psalm 104, but the transference of Baal's cloudy vehicle to Yahweh is marked by a change from the direct speech of the initial verse, which addresses Yahweh in the second person singular, to a narrator's voice, which uses a string of masculine singular participles to present Yahweh in the third person. This poetic device is lost in the NRSV, but it maintains a safe distance between Yahweh himself and the ensuing collection of attributes taken from other gods, which makes this psalm unique. I take it as a clue to the writer's awareness that the transference in Psalm 104 remained somewhat artificial. Either this Psalmist found it uneasy to praise Yahweh by attributing Baalic elements to him, or he sought to underline the transference in this way. In either way, the tone is not polemic, but it is clear that, to this writer at least, depicting Yahweh as a storm-god riding the clouds was something new. His traditional conception of Yahweh did not correspond to a storm-god, neither Baal nor any of the Near-Eastern storm-gods, since riding on the clouds was also common to the portrayal of storm-gods in Mesopotamia.[9] Therefore, Psalm 104 is less polemical

6. See Norman C. Habel, *Yahweh versus Baal: A Conflict of Religious Cultures* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1964), 81; G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (OTS 3; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 80–81; Green, *Storm-God*, 195.

7. L. Joffe, "The Answer to the Meaning of life, the Universe and the Elohistic Psalter," *JSOT* 27 (2002/3): 223–35 (224).

8. גבננים so rendered by Dahood, *Psalms 51–100,* 130.

9. Green, *Storm-God*, 195 notes that the clouds were the war-chariot of Mesopotamian storm-gods.

than Psalm 68, but the transference it generates is more self-conscious. The significance of this difference in attitude is discussed in Chapter 7.

The depiction of Yahweh riding upon a cloud in Isaiah 19.1 is set in a chapter which begins with an oracle of Yahweh against Egypt and ends on a strikingly universalistic note. In the future, both the Egyptians and the Assyrians will worship Yahweh and be considered his people, anticipating the monotheistic concept of Yahweh's universal rule. Hence, appropriation is clearly at work in this oracle against Egypt, which ascribes to Yahweh the exclusive control of the waters of the Nile (vv. 5–10). The focus of the appropriation is the host of Egyptian gods rather than Baal, even though Baal was equated with Seth in Egypt. Thus, Yahweh's riding upon a cloud and his taking over of the waters of the Nile in Isaiah 19 are clues of an implied polemic, but directed against the Egyptian pantheon.

6.1.2 Zaphon as Yahweh's Home

If storm-god attributes do not necessarily reflect transference of Baal's domain, Mount Zaphon is specifically Baal's dwelling.[10] Any passage that places Yahweh in relation to Zaphon is likely to be a claim for Yahweh to Baal's domain. If Yahweh was ever viewed as a storm-god, his home would have been located originally on another mountain.

The pairing of Baal and Zaphon is attested in a Hellenistic era text which derives from a community in Upper Egypt which probably comprised people who had roots in the northern kingdom of Israel, specifically Bethel.[11] Hence, the memory of Zaphon as Baal's dwelling endured for centuries.

In light of the clear association of Mount Zaphon with Baal, the mention of a Baal-zephon in Egypt (Exod. 14.2) is striking. Does it refer to an actual toponym,[12] an Egyptian branch of the North-Syrian cult?[13] Or does it transpose Baal's dwelling in Egypt to fit the framework of the Exodus? In the latter case, the fact that Exodus 14 does not associate Yahweh with Baal-zephon argues against any type of transference. The same can be said about the Jordan ford at Zaphon in Judges 12.1.

10. At Ugarit the mountain also appears to be portrayed as a god in its own right: see for instance KTU 1.47.15. For Phoenician names with the Zaphon element, see Hector Avalos, "Zaphon, Mount," *ABD* VI, 1040–1.

11. For this and a translation of the text, see "The Aramaic Text in Demotic Script," translated by Richard C. Steiner (*COS* 1.99.309–27). On the possibility that this text comes from a group with roots in Israel, see p. 310. According to the text, this group appears to have worshipped several deities throughout Mesopotamia, including Yaho, Bethel, Horus and others. Interestingly, this text mentions Judah, Samaria and Jerusalem in section XVI, on page 321. There is also reference to kissing calves in verse 12 on p. 313. See pp. 313 and 318 for the attestations of Baal from Zephon.

12. So, for example, Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 108.

13. J. J. M. Roberts, "The Davidic Origin of the Zion Tradition," *JBL* 92 (1973): 329–44; repr. in *Bible and the Ancient Near East*, 318.

Job's reference to Zaphon (Job 26.7) is clearly mythological. It is stretched over the deep, a possible but veiled reference to Baal's abode, but as the Creator referred to in this chapter is not explicitly Yahweh no transference can be recognized. The same applies to the reference to Zaphon in Isaiah 14.13. It is part of a rebuke to the king of Babylon, who is presumed to sit in the divine council and make himself equal to the Most High.

In Job 37.22, the mention that golden splendor emanates from Zaphon makes the connection with Baal's mountain almost certain, since the Baal Cycle describes Baal's palace atop Zaphon as being made from this precious metal.[14] Consequently, Baal's rich palace is claimed for Yahweh through an implied polemic.

While only a hint in Ps. 68.17 discussed above, the appropriation becomes much clearer in Ps. 48.3 (Eng. 2), where Baal's holy mountain is placed in poetic parallelism with Zion: "Mount Zion is the heights of Zaphon, the city of the great king."[15] Since verse 1 states that the mountain in question is Yahweh's, appropriation is intended, but the polemic remains implicit as Baal is not named.

Although the term "Zaphon" can simply mean "north," in particular in the statement that Yahweh created "Zaphon and the south" (Ps. 89.13 Eng. 12), Zaphon can be taken as a reference to Baal's mountain thirty miles north of Ugarit in Ps. 48.3 and in Job 37.22.[16]

To this list, Ezek. 1.4 can be added. Although the NRSV renders as "north" the origin of the stormy wind in Ezekiel's vision, the fact that this particular theophany involves "a great cloud with brightness around it and fire flashing forth" makes it likely that Baal's specific mountain is intended.

In a context of creation involving the rule of the Sea and the crushing of Rahab, Ps. 89.10–13 mentions Zaphon and other famous mountains: Amanus, Tabor and Hermon, all of them creations of Yahweh. The naming of Rahab, the monster vanquished by Baal, functions as the answer to the rhetorical question of verse 7: "For who in the skies can compare with Yahweh? Who resembles Yahweh among the sons of El?"[17] To an ancient audience, the answer may not have been as obvious as it is today. Memories of Mount Zaphon as Baal's home are attested in classical sources where Mount Casius is Zeus' abode.[18] There is little doubt that the Jerusalem literati were aware of Zaphon's association

14. Pope, *Job*, 286–7 writes: "With the recovery of the Ugaritic mythological texts, we are now in a better position to understand this verse which connects gold and Zaphon. A major motif of the Baal Cycle of myths is the building of a splendiferous palace of gold, silver, and lapis lazuli on the height of Mount Zaphon. The rendering 'golden splendor' may be appropriate as suggesting the glow of the lightning which comes from the mythical golden palace of the storm-god on Mount Zaphon." Clines, *Job 21–37*, 885 points to KTU 1.4.V.55 = *ANET*, 134a.

15. Roberts, "Davidic Origin of the Zion Tradition," 318.

16. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 108.

17. Based on Dahood, *Psalms 51–100,* 308.

18. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 107–8.

with Baal. Therefore, aspects that remained traditionally associated with other gods had to be evoked and consciously redirected towards Yahweh before the affirmation of Yahweh's uniqueness could become meaningful. Hence, verses 6–8 recall Yahweh's status as one of El's sons in the divine council before claiming that he is specifically the creator of Mount Zaphon. To the audience, the heavens were too populated for a simple affirmation of Yahweh's unicity to suffice. The polemic in this case is implicit. The transference is broader than Baal's domain, but the mention of Zaphon shows that Baal stands out as the main target.

6.1.3 Yahweh and the Fertility of the Fields

Isaac's blessing in Gen. 27.28 begins as a prayer that Elohim may supply some (מטל) of the dew of heaven, some (משמן) of the fatness of the earth and an abundance of grain and must. The previous verse equates Yahweh with Elohim. There is no polemic here, only transference to Yahweh of those elements that Baal was thought to preside over, notably the dew of heaven.

The covenant formula in Deut. 13.17 provides a fuller description of Yahweh's meteorological duties, listing the different kinds of rain to be sent at the right time to ensure an abundant supply of food for the obedient people and their livestock. Zechariah 14.17–18 adds the task of inflicting plague as far as Egypt if they do not confess Yahweh's universal kingship.

Most of the other references to Yahweh's control of the fertility of the land, for instance Zech. 10.1 and Hag. 1.9–11, do not evince any polemic, and could be taken as transference texts if Yahweh was not considered as a storm-god in his own right by the general audience of these oracles.

The transference is more polemical in Mal. 3.10–11, which ascribes to Yahweh the ability to keep the windows of heaven closed to withhold his blessing. The window of heaven is reminiscent of Baal's window in the Baal Cycle (§4.4.2) and thus implies a more polemical stance than the previous references to moisture.

Moses' blessing of the tribes of Joseph in Deut. 33.13 mentions "dew of heaven above, and of the deep that lies beneath," which presupposes that Yahweh is in charge of the fecundity of the land through the supply of moisture from above and from below. The source of underground waters, the deep (תהום), functions as a synonym for Sheol in Ezek. 31.15. Hence, Yahweh's control over this murky underworld region implies a non-polemical transference of domains beyond Baal's own.

6.1.4 Healing

Beyond securing the food-chain, divinities were also expected to intervene when illness struck. Malachi 3.20 (Eng. 4.2) reads: "But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall." The reference to the sun, here, is a true

reflection of healing abilities attributed to solar deities such as Shemesh.[19] It would be overdrawn to take the leaping calf as a reference to Baal's bovine associations, but this verse shows that the appropriation process had to cover every divine prerogative before Yahweh could eliminate all the other gods.

Ancient mythology, however, did not produce neat categories delineating the responsibilities of each member of the pantheon. Much overlap occurred with variations in time and locations and it is not always possible to decide whether it is Baal's attributes or those of another divinity that are claimed for Yahweh.

Nevertheless, Chapter 4 demonstrated that healing and the ability to raise one up from Sheol belonged to Baal's domain at Ugarit. These two motifs are often paired in the Hebrew Bible, for instance in the prayer of Hannah: "Yahweh kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up" (1 Sam. 2.6).

As advanced practice for his confrontation of Pharaoh's magicians, Moses' snake trick in Exod. 4.5–7 is combined with a hand sign involving leprosy. It is significant that the healing of Moses' leprous hand appears in the context of the claim that Yahweh is the god of Israel's ancestors (אלהי אבתם). As the patron of each of the patriarchs individually, Yahweh infringes on Baal's rule over Sheol, manifested by the ability to heal (Exod. 15.26) and draw one out of the Pit (Ps. 30.2–4 [Eng. 1–3]). Passages such as the reviving of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37 make the same point.[20] These texts transfer Baal's rule over death to Yahweh, in a non-polemical way.

The stance is more polemical in the story of the healing of Hezekiah, as Isaiah uses the uncommon expression "god of David your father" (2 Kgs 20.5). Compared with the emphasis on the "god of the fathers" in the patriarchal stories of Genesis, Isaiah avoids any reference to deified ancestors such as the Rephaim. The Yahweh who heals Hezekiah is the same god as the one David worshipped. It is Yahweh who is to be looked to for healing, not the ancestors. The context of the military threat in this chapter confirms the implicit polemic against Baal, as Yahweh promises that he will defend the city against Assyria. This is also a trait attested for Baal:

> If an enemy force attacks your [city-]gates,
> An aggressor, your walls;
> You shall lift up your eyes to Baal [and pray]:
> 'O Baal:
> Drive away the [enemy] force from our gates,

19. On Shemesh as a prominent healing divinity, see Walter Addison Jayne, *Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations* (Oxford, 1925; repr., Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2003), 127. He also explains that Marduk's consort, Sarpânîtum, a solar goddess, was a healing goddess.

20. Saul M. Olyan, "Unnoticed Resonances of Tomb Opening and Transportation of the Remains of the Dead in Ezekiel 37.12–14," *JBL* 128 (2009): 499–500 explains that "the literary pattern of a benevolent family or non-family member opening a tomb, transporting the remains of the dead, and reburying them in a family tomb on ancestral land is in the background of Ezek. 37:12–14," 500.

The aggressor from our walls.
We shall sacrifice a bull [to thee], O Baal,
A votive-pledge we shall fulfill [viz.]:
A firstborn, Baal, we shall sacrifice,
A child we shall fulfill [as votive-pledge].
A "tenth" [of all our wealth] we shall tithe [thee],
To the temple of Baal we shall go,
In the footpaths of the House-of-Baal we shall walk.'
Then shall Baal hearken to your prayers,
He shall drive the [enemy] force from your gates,
The aggressor from your walls.[21]

Although Baal remains subordinate to El at Ugarit, the above quotation shows that it was not towards the head of their pantheon that people turned for protection from invaders. It was not as Jerusalem's patron god and head of Judah's pantheon but as a young war-god of the Baal type that Yahweh would protect the city. Therefore, the polemical subtext in 2 Kgs 20.5–6 advances Yahweh's appropriation of Baal's role as war-god and as ruler of the Rephaim.

6.1.5 Yahweh Battling and Smiting the Monster

The battle against a sea monster is a very old motif, not exclusively associated with Baal from Ugarit.[22] The presence of this motif in the Hebrew Bible is not enough to identify Baal as the target. But, when it is combined with a mention

21. Translated by B. Margalit, "Why King Mesha of Moab Sacrificed His Oldest Son," *BAR* 12/06 (Nov/Dec 1986): 62–3 (62).

22. Shupak, "Water Monster," 77–89 raises the possibility that the prevalent notions for understanding the vestiges of this motif in the Hebrew Bible might not necessarily be correct ones; instead of seeing them as being mediated to the Hebrew Bible via Mesopotamia or Ugarit, they might have come by way of Egypt where the motif appears already in eighteenth–seventeenth century BCE sources. Shupak also explains that Egyptian attestations of the motif, in literary and iconographic finds, are not dependent on contacts with Semitic people, as is usually assumed. Egypt probably had its own independent versions of the motif. Jack Sasson, *Hebrew Origins: Historiography, History, Faith of Ancient Israel* (Chuen King Lecture Series 4; Hong Kong: Theology Division, Chung Chi College, 2002), 102 n.83 writes, "Around 1770 BCE, the god Adad sends a prophet to deliver a message to king Zimri-Lim of Mari." The message to the king draws on the motif when Adad tells the king, "But then I restored you to *your father's throne* and handed you the weapons with which I battled the Sea." This is but one example from Mari that shows how old the motif was. The discussion regarding the motif of God's battle with the sea as it appears in the Hebrew Bible was begun by H. Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895). Texts in the Hebrew Bible that show Yahweh's appropriation of the sea monster motif include Ps. 74.13–18, 104.25–7, Isa. 27.1–3; 51.9–10.

of Zaphon such as, "He stretches out Zaphon… By his power he stilled the Sea; by his understanding he struck down Rahab"(Job 26.7–14), the polemic is clear. Though Yahweh and Elohim are not explicitly mentioned in this chapter, Yahweh is the one Job is referring to, even though he confesses that his powerful thunder is beyond understanding.

The Ugarit corpus offered scholarship a corrective to the exclusively Mesopotamian influence that scholars postulated in the Hebrew Bible before the finds at Ras Shamra.[23] Canaanite mythology was surely dependent on imagery and stories from greater Mesopotamia. Babylonian mythology was mediated via Canaanite, specifically Ugaritic, channels. Therefore, the scholarly consensus grants a greater place to Baal as the source of the motif of the battle against the Sea Dragon, Leviathan (Isa. 27.1; Ps. 74.14), Rahab (Isa. 51.9) or Behemoth (Job 40.15). Even when the dragon has been turned as one of Yahweh's creatures (Gen. 1.21; Ps. 104.26) it retains the memory of Ugaritic Lotan and of its various Egyptian and Mesopotamian counterparts.[24]

If Yahweh was originally depicted as a storm-god, this motif would imply no transference. Otherwise, the polemic is implicit, especially when the battle motif occurs in conjunction with Zaphon, clouds, the Rephaim and Sheol, as it does in Job 26.6–14.

6.1.6 Yahweh and Pestilence

In light of Baal's warrior aspect in the Ugaritic Baal Cycle, Psalm 106.29 has a distinctive polemical stance: "They provoked Yahweh to anger with their deeds, and a plague broke out among them." The term "plague" here is a translation of the Hebrew term מגפה and Yahweh's ability to send it at will displays the appropriation of another of Baal's attributes, unless Yahweh was a similar type of deity in the mind of the writer.

At Ugarit, Baal is flanked by a deified pestilence, Resheph.[25] Resheph was a smiting underworld-type deity associated with disease in the Western Semitic world and beyond. In the Hebrew Bible the term רשף occurs with דבר "plague," preceding and following Yahweh as his bodyguards in Hab. 3.5, to show that Plague and Pestilence now serve Yahweh. Consequently, this prophetic text unveils the hiring of Baal's close associates in Yahweh's retinue.

23. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 98–9.

24. J. A. Emerton, "Leviathan and ltn: The Vocalization of the Ugaritic Word for the Dragon," *VT* 32 (1982): 327–31; Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 99; KTU 1.5.I.1–3; KTU 1.3.III.40–2; and "The Baʿlu Myth," trans. by Dennis Pardee (COS 1.86.265).

25. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 199 quotes KTU 1.82; on Resheph see P. Xella, "Resheph," *DDD,* 700–703.

6.2 El is Yahweh

Like Judg. 5.4–5 and Job 37.1–5 (§6.1.1), Nah. 1.3–7 presents Yahweh as a storm-god:

> Yahweh is slow to anger but great in power, and Yahweh will by no means clear the guilty. His way is in whirlwind and storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, and he dries up all the rivers; Bashan and Carmel wither, and the bloom of Lebanon fades. The mountains quake before him, and the hills melt; the earth heaves before him, the world and all who live in it. Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and by him the rocks are broken in pieces. Yahweh is good, a stronghold in a day of trouble; he protects those who take refuge in him.

This particular theophany is presented as a partial acrostic poem which breaks off halfway through the alphabet.[26] Moreover, the letter *dalet* is missing, as verse 4b begins with an *alef*, verse 6a starts with a *lamed* instead of the expected *zayin* and verse 7b with a *vav* instead of the *yod*, which the alphabetic sequence would require. As is common in scholarship, these irregularities are often attributed to scribal errors accumulated through centuries of careless copying of manuscripts, but the number of "errors" (three out of eleven letters) does not explain why this acrostic poem stops short at letter *kaf* (v. 7c) or *mem* (v. 9), when the *raison d'être* of acrostics is to cover the entire alphabet (see Pss. 111; 112; 119; Prov. 31.10–31; Lam. 3–4).[27] Hence, the Nahum Psalm has recently been placed in relation to the game of Senet, the use of which is well attested across the ancient Near East. As one version of this board game has 20 rather than 30 squares, this new approach can explain why the Nahum Psalm breaks off well before letter *tav* while all the irregular letters would indicate special moves of the counters on the board.[28] In procedures more complex than simple yes/no answers obtained with the Urim and Thummim, divine guidance was sought with Senet boards pointing to particular oracles within a collection. One of the aims of the formation of prophetic collections in the Hebrew Bible was their use in divination, something

26. Thomas Renz, "A Perfectly Broken Acrostic in Nahum 1?," *JHS* 9 (2009): 1–26. Available from: http//www.jhsonline.org

27. Hence, irregularities must be significant: Ps. 9–10 is missing seven letters. Ps. 25 is missing a *vav* and a *qof*. Ps. 34 is missing a *vav*. Pss. 25 and 34 have an extra *ayin* verse and the *pe* line added to the end. Ps. 37 is missing a verse for the letter *ayin*. Ps. 145 is missing a *nun* line. See R. Benun, "Evil and the Disruption of Order: Structural Analysis of the Acrostics in the First Book of Psalms," *JHS* 6 (2006): Article 5. Available from: http//www.jhsonline.org

28. See P. Guillaume, "Nahum 1: Psalm, Senet and Divination," in *A Palimpsest: Rhetoric, Ideology, Stylistics, and Language Relating to Persian Israel* (eds D. Edelman et al.; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009), 141–70.

which is well attested from the Hasmonean period onwards.[29] The twelve Minor Prophets would have been used in such a way.

Of special relevance here is Nah. 1.2. Whereas verse 1 is the book's superscription, verse 2 starts with letter *alef* (אל), and marks the beginning of the acrostic poem of which the next line, however, is found in verse 3b (בסופה). Between lines 2a and 3b, two extra lines produce the kind of elaborate word play which ancient scribes were particularly fond of and by which they displayed their skill.

The acrostic Psalm of Nahum 1.2–11 is introduced with an acrostic-telestic game. The form; Jonah 3.9; 4:2; Micah 2.8; 7.18–20. Here, the first and last letters of verse 1 (the superscription), and of verses 2–3a, underline that the jealous and avenging El (אל קנוא ונקם) is none other than Yahweh: the first letters of verses 2–3 produce the acrostic I am (א–נ–י), while the last letters of verses 1–3a yield the telestic (ה–ו–ה–י), reading together, "I am Yahweh."[30] The Yahwistic character is reinforced by the presence of the name Yahweh at the beginning and the end of verse 3a.

Although this psalm is replete with storm-god imagery, the burden of the last stage of its production was the affirmation that there was no other Elohim than Yahweh. That it was the final stage in the production of the psalm is confirmed by the fact that the acrostic-telestic uses the superscription of the book (v. 1), the work of editors who organized the Psalter. At this late stage, the implied polemic targeted El, while the body of the acrostic psalm depicts Yahweh as a storm-god, either because this was the way he was conceived of by the Psalmist, or in an effort to transfer Baal's imagery to Yahweh. The elaborate scribal work in Nahum 1 is a rare instance of the appropriation of El's domain. It is articulated with the appropriation of Baal in Chapter 7.

6.3 Asherah and Yahweh's Motherly Care

The leap from the modest pantheon of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah to strict monotheism was small but it did require a paradigm shift, particularly with regard to the elimination of the paredra and the conceptualizing of Yahweh as a mother as much as a father. Tellingly, the Hebrew Bible largely ignores Anat, and aims the polemics against Asherah, rarely Ashtart. As a young female unattached to any male and all too ready to challenge El's authority, Anat's status at Ugarit is unresolved.[31] Hence, it is hardly surprising that the Hebrew Bible in

29. Philip R. Davies, "Beginning at the End," in *Rereading Oracles of God: Twenty Years after John Barton, Oracles of God: Perceptions of Prophecy in Israel after the Exile* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986); *JHS* 7 (2007): 14, Article 7. Available from http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/JHS/Articles/article_75.pdf

30. See Guillaume, "Nahum 1," 134 and K. Spronk, "Acrostic in the Book of Nahum," *ZAW* 110 (1998): 209–22 (216–17).

31. N. H. Walls, *The Goddess Anat in Ugaritic Myth* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 77–86.

the main ignores Anat and focuses on Asherah. The importance of Asherah is confirmed by inscriptions. On pithos 1 at Kuntillet Ajrud, Yahweh of Samaria is paired with Asherah (§2.2.1). The inscription at Khirbet el-Qom also pairs the Yahweh of the Judean south with Asherah.[32] Hence, there is no doubt that, in the Iron Age, Asherah was Yahweh's consort both in Israel and in Judah, and that it was incumbent upon Yahweh to take over the duties and functions traditionally ascribed to Asherah.

Examples come by way of instances where Yahweh is portrayed as watching over women during childbirth and procreation, notably where Yahweh is associated with the care over the womb, showing that Yahweh has taken over the task that formerly belonged to El's consort. A few examples that display non-polemical transference are as follows:

> Shall I open the womb and not deliver? says Yahweh; shall I, the one who delivers, shut the womb? says your God. (Isa. 66.9)
> As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you. (Isa. 66.13)
> He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise Yahweh! (Ps. 113.9)
> Give them, Yahweh—what will you give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. (Hos. 9.14)
> For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. (Ps. 139.13)

Other examples of Yahweh's involvement in the development of the fetus are found in Job 31.15; Isa. 44.2, 24; Isa. 49.1, 5 and possibly 15; Jer. 1.5. The five to six instances in Second Isaiah which associate Yahweh with the womb are a high proportion for such a small corpus when compared with the rest of the Hebrew Bible.[33]

As Second Isaiah explicitly mentions Cyrus (Isa. 44.28, 45.1), this collection indicates that Asherah was still venerated in Judah during the Persian era. The frequency of instances in Second Isaiah, however, does not approximate a polemic because more clues need to be present, but they provide instances of non-polemical transference texts which sought to show that it was Yahweh and not another who took care of the womb and related issues. In every case, non-polemical transference of Asherah's domain is at work, because Yahweh would not originally have been portrayed in a similar manner or functioned in the same way as the goddess. Even a pantheon such as Elephantine's maintained the distinction between the sexes, reserving human fertility to the care of the goddess.

32. McCarter, "Kuntillet 'Ajrud," *COS* 2.171; McCarter, "Kirbet El-Qom," *COS* 2.179.

33. Outside Isaiah see Job 31.15; Pss. 113..9, 139.13; Jer. 1.5; and Hos. 9.14. The most conspicuous example comes from Isa. 66.9, which reads, "'Shall I open the womb and not deliver?' Says Yahweh; 'shall I, the one who delivers, shut the womb?' says your God."

6.4 Partial Appropriation in Chronicles

Later than the Persian era, 2 Chronicles 7 paints a portrait of Yahweh that integrates most of the elements transferred from Baal's domain, while what belonged to El and to Asherah are strangely omitted:

> When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (2 Chron. 7.13–14)

Yahweh decides whether or not to dispense rain. He can send locusts to destroy the crops, smite people with plagues and heal them when they repent. Prior to this list, fire comes down from heaven to consume a burnt offering and the glory of Yahweh fills the new temple (2 Chron. 7.1). These were all from Baal's specific domain at Ugarit transferred to Yahweh in numerous polemical and non-polemical biblical passages. Yet, after centuries of reading these transference texts, the Chronicler fails to add human fertility to the list of blessings and curses. Despite the association of Asherah with Baal in the violent polemics of the Torah and the Prophets, the Chronicler omits Yahweh's care of the womb taken over from Asherah, as though Yahweh's characteristics as a storm-god remained distinct. Yahweh's masculinity was still too "pregnant" to accept the mention of goddess elements in the same breath as his storm-god characters. The process of appropriation of other deities' domains was not yet completed at the beginning of the Hellenistic era, when Chronicles was produced, and the next chapter attempts to trace some of the stages on the road to the eventual collapse of the pantheon.

Chapter 7

Mapping the Rise of Monotheistic Yahwism

As should be clear now, the Hebrew Bible depicts Yahweh with a combination of ancient Near-Eastern imagery associated with El, Baal and Asherah. The appropriation and amalgamation of traits regularly associated with an enthroned-god, a storm-god and a paredra were prerequisites for the portrayal of Yahweh as the only god that embodies every divine category.[1] The triumph of Yahwistic monotheism is the end result of a long process of amalgamation of traits from different types of gods, a process that needs to be understood in its broad lines if the mistake of the early-monotheistic Yahwism paradigm, taking the end result for its origin, is to be avoided (see Chapter 1).

The categories of polemical, implied polemical and non-polemical transference texts delineated in Chapter 3 and applied in Chapters 5 and 6 offer a typology of the tactics deployed in the Hebrew Bible to transfer the functions of different gods to Yahweh. It is now possible to suggest a rough schema for Yahweh's rise to the head of the pantheon before the entire pantheon was collapsed and biblical Yahwism could become properly monotheistic. Yahwistic monotheism proceeded along a trajectory that began in the Bronze Age, which witnessed the rise of El and Asherah at the head of the pantheon at Ugarit and in the Southern Levant.[2]

As Baal was prominent among the Phoenicians and was venerated as the head deity of the Syrian pantheon under the name of Hadad, and given the proximity and exposure of Israel to Phoenician and Syrian influences, it is not surprising that the Israelites viewed their head deity in similar terms: as a storm-god. Therefore, Jeroboam's bulls and Aaron's golden calf represent Yahweh's pedestal in the same way as they do Baal's; the latter was portrayed standing on a bull.

1. Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, "The Elusive Essence: YHWH, El and Baal and the Distinctiveness of Israelite Faith," in *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte* (eds E. Blum et al.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 411. Here Mettinger writes that Yahweh combines a Baal/Hadad type of deity and an El-type deity.

2. Miller and Hayes, *History of Ancient Israel*, 109–10; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 44–60 and Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 16–17.

Northern portrayals of Yahweh in storm-god garb did not convey any polemic. They may simply have reflected Yahweh as he was conceived of in Israel.[3]

In Judah, however, the representation of Yahweh with traits that were shared with Baal was obviously considered problematic, or the fierce anti-Baal polemics in the Hebrew Bible make no sense. Is it possible to find confirmation of such a difference of understanding of Yahweh in Israel and in Judah? To be in a position to answer the question, it is necessary to clarify my position on the origins of Yahweh.

7.1 The Origins of Yahweh

The Midianite or Kenite hypothesis is the best known theory for the origins of Yahweh.[4] This theory holds that Yahweh originated in the South, a tradition echoed in Deuteronomy 33.2, Judges 5.4 and Habakkuk 3.3.[5] South, here, denotes south of Judah, i.e. the Sinai, Paran, Edom, Teman, Seir or Midian. Going back to the late nineteen century CE, the theory holds that Yahweh was mediated to Israel via Moses who learned of Yahweh from his father-in-law Hobab the Kenite, a branch of the Midianites and a priest of Yahweh. This much can be extrapolated from the Hebrew Bible.

There is much debate as to when the name Yahweh is first attested. It probably appears circa 1400 BCE as an element in the Egyptian designation of groups living outside Egypt, the "Shasu Yhw" on a topographic list of Amenhotep III on the Temple of Amon in Soleb (modern Sudan).[6] A temple of Rameses II records the same information, copied from Amenhotep's temple, with the addition of "Shasu Seir," which concurs with Deut. 33.2 and Judg. 5.4.

Earlier references to Yahweh in theophoric names in Mesopotamia (in the Kassite period, sixteenth to twelfth centuries BCE)[7] and in Egypt remain ambiguous.[8] In any case, Yahweh played a minor role in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

3. For pictures of iconographic finds from the ancient Near East where storm-gods are portrayed standing on the backs of bulls, see *ANEP*, 170 (summary on p. 308) and 179. Also, the drawing of the relief from Maltaya on p. 181 possibly displays the storm-god, Adad, as the deity who is standing upon the backs of bulls; whereas, the other deities in the relief are standing upon the backs of different animals.

4. See Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Midianite-Kenite Hypothesis Revisited and the Origins of Judah," *JSOT* 33 (2008): 131–53.

5. See Lars Eric Axelsson, *The Lord Rose up from Seir: Studies in the History and Traditions of the Negev and Southern Judah* (ConBOT 25; Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1987).

6. See Raphael Giveon, *Les Bédouins Shosou des documents égyptiens* (Leiden: Brill, 1971).

7. Private conversation with Stephanie Dalley.

8. See Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *In Search of God: The Meaning and Message of the Everlasting Names* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 36–40. A Book of the Dead from the eighteenth or nineteenth dynasty (sixteenth to twelfth centuries BCE) was owned by a

The fact that, so far, Yahweh is not attested at Ugarit, militates against the idea that Yam is a caricature for Yahweh in the Baal Cycle.[9] The common etymology that sees Yahweh as a form of the verb "to be" (יהוה <היה) is a pseudo-etymology based on the pun "I am who I am" in Exodus 3.14. More likely is the etymology derived from the well-attested Arabic root *hwy* meaning "to blow," which fits the function of a storm-god and the southern origins of the name Yahweh, in this case in the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula as indicated by the Hebrew Bible.[10]

Another debated issue is the relation of Yahweh and El. Either Yahweh was an epithet that grew out of El,[11] or Yahweh was a separate deity who later merged with El.[12] Both positions could be harmonized, since Yahweh could originally have grown out of an epithet for El, possibly in the South, and Yahweh could have secondarily merged back into El, since Deut. 32.8–9 depicts Yahweh as subordinate to El Elyon.

The debate concerning the origins of Yahweh is taking a new direction thanks to the claim that Yahweh was originally the Edomite/Kenite god of metallurgy. This theory assumes that the Edomite Qos was a title used for Yahweh rather than a proper name.[13] In this case, the Edomites are to be included as early worshippers of Yahweh (as suggested by the kinship between Israel and Edom in Deut. 2.4; 23.8 [Eng. 7]), and the Midianite-Kenite Hypothesis should be broadened to include them.[14] Since it is predominantly in northern traditions of the Hebrew Bible that Yahweh is remembered as coming from the South, Yahweh would have been adopted first in northern Israel via traders and trade routes. Since the genealogies of Genesis 36 and 1 Chron. 2.50–5 relate the Gibeonites and the Edomites, King

man with the Northwest Semitic name, "My lord is the shepherd of Yah," Yah being the theophoric element Yahweh: see Thomas Schneider, "The First Documented Occurrence of the God Yahweh? (Book of the Dead Princeton Roll 5)," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 7 (2007): 113–28, and Herbert B. Huffmon, "Yahweh and Mari," in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* (ed. H. Goedicke; Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1971), 283–9.

9. Against J. C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism* (rev. and enl. ed.; BETL XCI; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 164–71.

10. Philippe Guillaume, *The Bible in its Context: An Inquiry into its Formation* (Beirut: Naufal Group, 2005), 23; van der Toorn "Yahweh," *DDD*, 916; Ernst A. Knauf, "Yahwe," *VT* 34 (1984): 467–72; J. Wellhausen, *Israelitische und Jüdische Geschichte* (Berlin: Reimer, 1897), 25.

11. Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 60–75 thought that Yahweh hypostasized from El. This view is accepted by de Moor, *Rise of Yahwism,* 244 and Patrick D. Miller, *Religion*.

12. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 13–17; Smith, *God in Translation*, 96–98.

13. Nissim Amzallag, "Yahweh, the Canaanite God of Metallurgy?," *JSOT* 33 (2009): 387–404.

14. Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 281–6.

Saul, who seems to have had a Gibeonite background, would have been influential in the mediation of Yahweh in Israel.[15]

To summarize, it is fair to say that, before the indisputable mention of Yahweh on the stele erected by the king of Moab in the ninth century BCE, extra-biblical references to Yahweh are ambiguous. One can only postulate the existence of worshippers of Yahweh somewhere in the Sinai and in Northern Arabia in the Late Bronze Age.[16] The next step is to trace how Yahweh was understood in the Iron Age.

As the paucity of evidence prevents the drawing of firm conclusions as to Yahweh's original character, the opposite stance, that Yahweh was originally an El-type god rather than a Baal-type storm-god, should be considered. Much revolves around the conclusions drawn from the abundance of polemics in the Hebrew Bible against the weather-god Baal and the corresponding absence of polemics against El. Had Yahweh originally been a storm-god, one might expect to find more virulence regarding the transfer of El's domain to Yahweh. By contrast, if Yahweh had been an El-type god right from the beginning, the lack of polemics towards El seems more logical. As El was the head of the Syro-Palestinian pantheons in the Late Bronze Age, and probably at the beginning of the Iron Age, an El-type Yahweh was quickly and easily equated with El, which placed him at the head of the Israelite pantheon.

The argument, however, can be reversed. Whether Yahweh was first conceived as a storm-god or as an El-type deity, the fight would be to maintain his distinctive conceptualization in the face of other similar gods, storm-gods or El-type gods. In either case, the felt need would have been to distinguish Yahweh in some way from others gods of the same category. Therefore, it is next to impossible to draw any firm conclusion regarding Yahweh's original characterization. It is likely, also, that we view the difference between storm-gods and El-type gods as more significant than did our Iron Age ancestors. Living in a conceptual world shaped by centuries of monotheism presented as a superior theistic framework to polytheism, we tend to function with categories that are too sharply defined.

Nevertheless, the pairing of Yahweh with Asherah at Khirbet el-Qom and Kuntillet Ajrud (§2.2.1) argues in favor of Yahweh's being an El-type god who was flanked with the same goddess as El at Ugarit. Yet, it was not as El but as Elohim that Yahweh eventually absorbed the entire Levantine pantheon. At first, Yahweh's major competitor was Baal, and it took centuries before all El-type traits would be appropriated for Yahweh (§7.5.5).

7.2 Historical Reconstruction of the Rise of Biblical Monotheism

Meindert Dijkstra views El as the God of Israel, possibly northern Israel, but warns that "Judg. 5 only shows one facet of the ancient Israelite religion as Israel

15. Van der Toorn, "Saul and the Rise of Israelite State Religion," *VT* 43 (1993): 519–42.

16. J. Andrew Dearman, *Religion & Culture in Ancient Israel* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 21.

was a patchwork quilt politically and religiously. In this context, Yahweh was an outsider, newcomer."[17] Judges 5 certainly supports the view of ancient Israel as a patchwork of tribes whose solidarity was proportional to the proximity of a threat. Peripheral groups are thus railed at for not sending troops to support their fellow Israelites. There is no need to venture into the origin of this victory song. What matters here is its preservation and transmission.

7.2.1 Judges 5 and Omride Yahwism

Although the attribution of dates to biblical texts is an exceedingly subjective enterprise – one that I have tried to avoid as much as possible in this study – the claim that Judges 5 transmits one of the oldest poems of the Hebrew Bible is one of the least contentious of the entire debate, despite the present tendency of advancing ever later dates for most texts that comprise the Hebrew Bible.[18] Fortunately, what is relevant here is not the actual origins of the Song of Deborah, but its preservation and transmission. Before the foundation of Samaria as the capital of the Kingdom of Israel, Israel was an economic backwater. Therefore, I take the Omride court as the most significant setting for the early stages of preservation and transmission of the Song of Judges 5.[19]

Compared with the territory encompassed in the Song of Deborah, the stories of Saul have a narrow focus on Benjamin. The broader territory ruled by Saul's successors (Gilead, the Ashurites, Jezreel, Ephraim and Benjamin) bears greater similarities with the area referred to in the Song of Deborah, even though, with the exception of the laconic note in 2 Sam. 2.8, we know nothing about Eshbaal, while the territory ruled by his successors seems limited to the highland. Hence, after Eshbaal, it is Omri and Ahab who ruled over an Israel as broad as the tribes mentioned in Judges 5.

The thriving economic context that prevailed in Israel in the days of the Omride dynasty was conducive to the preservation of Judges 5. The Omrides could afford the services of scribes who recorded the ancient victory song. Not only could they afford it, the Omrides needed an ideological cement to bind the Israelite patchwork quilt into a shared coherent territorial state, politically as well

17. Meindert Dijkstra, "El, the God of Israel—Israel, the People of YHWH: On the Origins of Ancient Israelite Yahwism," in *Only One God? Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah* (eds B. Becking et al.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 92.

18. See Ernst Axel Knauf, "Deborah's Language. Judges 5 in its Hebrew and Semitic Context," in *Studia Semitica et Semitohamitica* (eds J. Tropper and H. Younansardaroud; AOAT 317; Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2005), 167–82. Raymond de Hoop, "Judges 5 Reconsidered: Which Tribes? What Land? Whose Song?," in *The Land of Israel in Bible, History, and Theology. Studies in Honour of Ed Noort* (eds J. van Ruiten and J. Cornelis de Vos; SVT 124; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 151–67.

19. See Knauf, "Deborah's Language," 170.

as religiously.[20] The Omride scribes used the Song as this ideological cement, because religion or cult was (and still is) one of the most powerful factors in the formation of a common identity.[21] Other identity-shaping ideologies were probably unavailable at the time. Ethnicity is commonly evoked as a factor that bound proto-Israelite tribes.[22] "Ethnicity," however it may be defined, is probably a phenomenon that arose later, as a result of wide-scale Assyrian deportations and the gradual erasure of boundaries.[23] Unless ethnicity is used as a ragbag for anything having to do with identity, "ethnicity" ought to be a term reserved for describing "social relationships structured around differences that are based on and communicated by commonly accepted markers of such differentiation."[24] One important marker is common descent, not actual biological descent but a socially constructed discourse of such descent.[25] Another ethnic marker is a shared past and a homeland associated with the group, though it does not imply political control of that territory.[26]

Among these three standard identity markers, the notion of a common descent is probably a later development, finalized with the construction of the patriarchal triad in which Jacob ultimately becomes Abraham's grandson. In any case, the Song of Deborah does not elaborate on descent. Nor does it show any interest in differentiating Israel from others – like the uncircumcised Philistines as they are commonly described in the Book of Samuel (1 Sam. 14.6; 17.26, 36; 31.4; 2 Sam. 1.20, but also Judg. 14.3; 15.18).

By contrast, the Song of Deborah in verses 14–18 delineates Israel's homeland with the list of tribes. The list delineates a mental map in which the subjects of

20. Dijkstra, "El", 92.

21. Carla M. Antonaccio, "(Re) Defining Culture, Material Culture and Identity," in *Material Culture and Social Identities in the Ancient World* (eds S. Hales and T. Hodos; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 32–53.

22. See for instance Avraham Faust, *Israel's Ethnogenesis: Settlement, Interaction, Expansion and Resistance. Approaches to Anthropological Archaeology* (London: Equinox, 2007).

23. Simo Parpola, "National and Ethnic Identity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Assyrian Identity in Post-Empire Times," *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 18 (2004): 1–22. Frederick Mario Fales, "Ethnicity in the Assyrian Empire: A View from the Nisbe, (I): Foreigners and "Special" Inner Communities," in *Literature as Politics, Politics as Literature. Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist* (eds D. S. Vanderhooft and A. Winitzer; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 47–74.

24. See Brian A. Brown, "Culture on Display: Representations of Ethnicity in the Art of the Late Assyrian State," in *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art* (eds B. A. Brown and M. H. Feldman; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 515–44 (517).

25. Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (3rd edn; London: Pluto, 2010), 17.

26. Sam Lucy, "Ethnic and Cultural Identities," in *The Archaeology of Identity: Approaches to Gender, Age, Status, Ethnicity and Religion* (eds M. Diaz-Andreu, S. Lucy, S. Babic and D. N. Edwards; London: Routledge, 2005), 86–109 (101).

King Ahab were to see themselves and feel part of Israel. Since the notion of "Israel" was not potent enough to generate a sense of common identity among its intended audience, Israel had to be defined around the worship of Yahweh. The praise of Yahweh as the God of Israel in Judg. 5.3, 5 leads to the mention of the people or militia of Yahweh (עם יהוה) in verse 11. In the days of Eshbaal, the *ʿam Yahweh* would not have included all the groups listed in verses 14–18.[27] But in the days of the Omride dynasty, the list marked out the horizon of the Omride realm. Singing this song of victory at tribal gatherings contributed toward holding the patchwork quilt together, delineating a common identity for an Israel conceived of as Yahweh's people rather than as a motley crew of likely unwilling subjects of an Ephraimite (or some other tribal affiliation) who happened to set himself up as king at Samaria to lord it over the other tribes of the Central Palestinian Range and beyond. Religion has long provided the necessary justification for calls to arms, self-sacrifice and the extraction of taxes passed off as free-will offerings.[28] Crafting an Israelite identity on both sides of the Jordan was a necessity for the Omrides, and enrolling piety to do so was one of the only courses of action available to them. According to the biblical scenario, praising Yahweh as the God of Israel belongs to a venerable doxology going back to the beginning of Moses' career (Exod. 6.3). Historically, however, the call to tradition legitimized the novelty of the depiction of an Israel that was broader than its cradle in the Central Palestinian Range. The strong affirmation of Yahwism in the Song of Deborah unites Israel around a more militant religion than Bethel's Elism. In light of Baly's description of Zoroastrianism and Atonism as imperial monotheistic religions, the Yahwism of Judges 5 can be termed a "Samarian monotheism."[29]

The notion of "imperial monotheism" or "imperial theism" pertains to the supreme ruler of the universe whose rule is mediated by subordinates. This form of monotheism is well attested in the Hellenistic era, when it was contrasted with belief in one unique god and also with belief in many equal gods. Imperial monotheism postulated a superior god ruling among lesser gods. Reflecting the apparatus of the great empires, imperial monotheism acknowledged

> a supreme god while encouraging the cultic worship of national and local gods predicated with distinct capacities and qualities. These gods are divine personalities that serve the supreme god just as provincial administrators serve their emperor and captains serve their general.[30]

27. See P. Guillaume, "Deborah and the Seven Tribes," *BN* 101 (2000): 18–21.

28. On the use of religion in Cold War American propaganda, see Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War. Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, 2006), 310–14.

29. Baly, "Geography of Monotheism," 261.

30. Niketas Siniossoglou, "From Philosophic Monotheism to Imperial Henotheism: Esoteric and Popular Religion in Late Antique Platonism," in *Monotheism Between Pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity* (eds S. Mitchell and P. van Nuffelen; Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 127–48 (127).

This understanding of monotheism presupposes a clear distinction between the domains of civic and imperial cults as well as between philosophic monotheism and popular religions. It also relies on a Platonist philosophical apparatus which conceives of gods as parts of one divine personality.

Obviously, the Samarian monotheism presented here had no such elaborate conceptual framework, nor did it need any. Its horizon was more limited than that of the great empires that claimed to rule the world. Ahab merely ruled over a narrow strip on both sides of the Jordan River. Yet, it is likely that, like imperial monotheism, Samarian monotheism did not seek to impose any exclusivity on its subjects. As much as Roman subjects worshipped any god of their liking as long as they presented their dues to the divinized emperor, Samarian monotheism would not have entailed the denigration of El or of any other god the tribes over which the Omrides ruled may have worshipped. This would have been counter-productive, if the aim was to consolidate the grip of the kingdom over the tribes that were expected to identify with Israel.

The identification of individual groups with the people of Yahweh raises the question of the relation of Yahweh to El. As one of the sons of El (see Deut. 32. 8 and §2.1.4), Yahweh was associated with the vigor of youth, a fitting attribute for a warrior god who was supposed to lead its people in battle (Judg. 5.5).

7.2.2 Evidence of Samarian Yahwism

The worship of Yahweh of Shomron (Samaria in Hebrew) is mentioned at Kuntillet Ajrud (*COS* II.171–2). The Mesha stele (lines 17–18, *COS* II.137–8) relates the Omrides to the worship of Yahweh. The last Omride king, Ahaziah, bears a Yahwistic name, as do other known members of the Omride dynasty, like Joram and Athaliah. Finally, the Samaria ostraca confirm the importance of Yahweh in the city of the Omrides. Out of fifty different personal names, eleven of those composed with a theophoric element are constructed with *yh* and six with *ba'al*. The other attested divinities are the Egyptian Bes and Horus. Baal can be an epithet for Yahweh and in some cases "baal" can refer to Yahweh as lord. Hence, it is clear that the name Yahweh was the most popular in and around Samaria in the first half of the eighth century BCE, the date usually ascribed to the Samaria ostraca.[31] Even if the popularity of Yahwistic names is read as the consequence of Jehu's elimination of the Omrides, the royal names of Joram, Athaliah and Ahaziah clearly indicate that the official Omride religion was not the kind of anti-Yahweh Baalism described in the Elijah cycle. The testimony of the Mesha stele confirms that Samaria never was a hot-bed of Baalism understood to be non-Yahwistic.

While non-biblical sources provide a clear picture of the religious situation in Israel from the days of the Omrides onward, non-biblical sources are silent before

31. See Matthias Köckert, "YHWH in the Northern and Southern Kingdom," in *One God–One Cult–One Nation* (eds R. G. Kratz and H. Spieckermann; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 357–94 (366).

the Omrides. This silence is a token of the deep transformations that occurred in the material culture at the time of the Omrides. Besides inscriptions and onomastics, the remains of Omride architectural accomplishments at Samaria, Megiddo and Jezreel provide evidence for the importance of their reigns. There is no conclusive argument that Samaria was a city before the Omrides chose the site for their new capital.[32] The previous Israelite monarchs, Jeroboam I, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Tibni (c. 927–882 BCE), had alternating residencies (Shechem, Penuel, Tirzah) from where they interacted with the tribal elites of the regions over which they exerted their rule as a mobile and flexible military kingship. Mobility and flexibility characterize this type of kingship, which is well documented by Labayu's career in the Amarna letters.[33] Compared with these mobile kings, the impressive royal residence the Omrides built at Samaria "constitutes a substantial development in the previous power structure … with its flat hierarchy and only moderately developed administration."[34]

From the "substantial development" reflected in the construction of Samaria it can be inferred quite safely that substantial development occurred on the religious scene. Thanks to favorable economic and political conditions, the Omrides were very successful and the hatred evinced in the Book of Kings towards Ahab and Jezebel is a clear clue to the changes they introduced in the traditional power structure of Israel. The relentless anti-Baal polemics in the Elijah cycle indicate that the changes also involved innovations in the religious sphere.

At this point, a distinction should be made between Samaria and Bethel. On the basis of Amos 7.13, scholars often assume that Bethel was the state sanctuary while Samaria was its political capital.[35] Neither site has yet yielded any temple, but the importance of Bethel is beyond doubt. It is mentioned repeatedly in the Torah, while Jerusalem is never mentioned.[36] Stating the obvious, I take Bethel as a sanctuary primarily dedicated to El.

Not so obvious is the claim that the introduction of Yahweh in the founding legend of Bethel in Gen. 28.14 is one of the substantial developments of Omride times. That the Book of Kings attributes to Jeroboam the setting up of a calf image in Bethel cannot be used as evidence for the worship of Baal in Bethel as the bull may have represented El as much as Baal. It shows only that Jerusalem claimed

32. H. M. Niemann, "Royal Samaria – Capital or Residence? or: The Foundation of the City of Samaria by Sargon II," in *Ahab Agonistes: The Rise and Fall of the Omri Dynasty* (ed. L. L. Grabbe; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 184–207.

33. Israel Finkelstein and Nadav Na'aman, "Shechem of the Amarna Period and the Rise of the Northern Kingdom," *IEJ* 55 (2005): 172–93.

34. H. M. Niemann, "Observations on the Layout of Iron Age Samaria," *UF* 43 (2011): 325–34 (330).

35. Köckert, "YHWH," 368.

36. But on Salem in Gen. 14.18 see E. Ben Zvi, "The Memory of Abraham in Late Persian/Early Hellenistic Yehud/Judah," in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods* (eds D. V. Edelman and E. Ben Zvi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1–37 (17).

that the northern kingdom was doomed from the beginning, because it was founded on the worship of Baal or El, and that even Jehu did not turn away from the sin of Jeroboam (2 Kgs 10.28–9). Given the massacres that are attributed to Jehu, this is paradoxical, though less so if the attribution of the "sin" to Jeroboam is a projection of a novelty introduced by the Omrides back onto earlier times that might not have referred to the storm-god Baal at all. We have no external sources to confirm the biblical account of Jeroboam's "reform," but it is logical to claim that the Omrides repeated or initiated the confession that 1 Kgs 12.28 puts on Jeroboam's lips: "Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." The context in which the confession is set indicates that the writers objected to the fact that the confession was not made in Jerusalem. Baalism is a side issue. If Baal was an epithet for Yahweh, the core issue is iconism, not Baalism. Nevertheless, the bulls of Dan and Bethel reflect the awareness that the cult of this god was sponsored by the royal house throughout the realm,[37] while the calf of Samaria mentioned in Amos 8.5 confirms the link between the Omrides and the "reform." The personal name *'glyh,* "calf" plus the short form of Yahweh attested to on Samaria ostracon #41 should dissipate all doubts about the Yahwistic character of the calves and about the Yahwism of the Omrides.[38] The sin of Jeroboam consisted of the introduction by the Omrides of Yahweh beside El at Bethel and across Israel. In this case, profound changes occurred before the seventh and sixth centuries BCE,[39] but not as early as the so-called "Period of the Judges" which designates a succession of biblical books but does not correspond to any historical era.[40] Samaria is often depicted as a mere political center with no religious tradition, which then is used to downplay the importance of the kingdom of Israel in the emergence of monotheism: "continuous change on the throne and in the dynasties created permanent unrest. Further, the main sanctuary was disconnected from the capital. In contrast to that, Judah was blessed with the Temple in Jerusalem and a long Davidic dynasty."[41]

Depicting the Omrides as the main patrons of the cult of Yahweh in Israel requires overcoming the hypnotic power of the "reforms" of Hezekiah and Josiah and the forceful biblical portrayal of the Omrides as uttermost idolaters. In fact, the two elements are intimately linked. The reforms of the Judahite kings highjack the Omrides' religious innovation and appropriate Ahab's Yahwism for Jerusalem.

The reigns of Omri and Ahab mark the turning point when writing spread to meet the requirements of the administration of a realm greater than was the case for earlier Israelite kings. These sources reveal the importance of Yahwism

37. Köckert, "YHWH," 371.

38. F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, J. J. M. Roberts, C. L. Seow and R. E. Whitaker, *Hebrew Inscriptions* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005), 463.

39. *Pace* Köckert, "YHWH," 363.

40. *Pace* Smith, *Early History*, 187.

41. Köckert, "YHWH," 388, although pages 364–7 demonstrate that there was a temple of Yahweh at Samaria.

throughout the Omride period and thus provide a solid starting point for tracing the convergence of the other gods and the eventual collapse of the pantheon.

7.2.3 Samarian Monotheism as Religion of the Outside

The Yahwism that is well attested in the days of the Omrides was one of the strategies used to transform Israel into one of the main military powers of the Levant, on a par with Damascus. Instead of promoting Baal to erase Yahwism, as the Elijah cycle claims Ahab did, the Omrides promoted the cult of the outsider and stated that Yahweh was henceforth Israel's God, not the god of a patchwork Israel, but the god of the powerful kingdom they formed out of tribes of the Central Palestinian Range. That, new, kingdom could not have gained the assent of the peripheral tribes mentioned in Judges 5 had it been called Ephraim, Manasseh or Benjamin. In the same way, the new definition of Israel operated by the Omrides, from a tribal patchwork to a strong kingdom, required a divine patron outside the traditional pantheon of the tribal members of the kingdom. Hence, Judges 5 underlines the southern origins of Yahweh as much as it grants much glory to women. Deborah and Yael did not belong to the tribal heroes of Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin. Ephraim would not identify with Saul the Benjaminite hero. Benjamin and Ephraim would not identify with Jephthah the Gileadite, and Gideon the Abiezrite would be no help in enrolling the lowland tribes. With Yahweh the Southerner, Deborah could become the mother *of* Israel, not only *in* Israel (Judg. 5.7), because the Song mutes her tribal identity as much as it does that of Barak the son of Abinoam. By contrast, as the wife of Heber the Kenite, Yael is designated another foreigner (Judg. 5.24). Once the kingdom of the Omrides managed to override the tribal identity of its main constituents, the prose version of the Song somewhat remedied the lack of tribal affiliations by marrying Deborah with Lappidoth and setting the Song of Deborah in Ephraim, while claiming that Barak was from Naphtali (Judg. 4.4–6). Yet, in the days of Omri and Ahab, it was crucial that the heroes of the Song should stand aside from the tribal folklore as much as Yahweh stood aside from tribal panthea. In this case, at least, the names of the gods did matter.[42] The construction of the Omride kingdom involved the promotion of outsider heroes and of an outsider god. According to Judges 5, this god was Yahweh. Contemporary non-biblical sources confirm the prevalence of Yahweh in the onomastic record. Like Hosea 1–3, the Omrides strove to show that Yahweh is Israel's Baal. When Omri became king, Yahweh may not have been a newcomer any more, but he was still remembered as an outsider.[43] As far as can be inferred from the names Israel and Bethel, in pre-Omride Israel, El was the insider. Besides El, other divine names attested in the Hebrew Bible would have been current among the families and tribes that made up the patchwork quilt of pre-Omride Israel. In this case, the Baalism of the Omrides consisted in the promotion of Yahweh as the dynastic god and as the

42. Against Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian,* 47.

43. Dijkstra, "El", 92.

patron of the new city of Samaria. The presence of Jezebel at Samaria facilitated the designation of the Yahwism of the Omrides as Baalism, since the Phoenician cities named their main divinities with Baal elements.

7.2.4 Refuting Earlier Monotheistic Yahwism

Every attempt to trace back pre-Omride Israelite religion is hypothetical due to the lack of corroborating sources. The lack of sources opens the door for constructions of the religion of ancient Israel that are published as reconstructions, thanks to the scholarly tone in which they are couched. These ingenious houses of cards are persuasive because, consciously or not, they find an echo in the social awareness of biblical scholars. Devoid of external control from external sources, reconstructions of the emergence of Yahwistic monotheism belong to the social memory of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century scholars.

Gnuse's construction of the emergence of monotheism is a case in point. Although it underlines both the long process and the similarities of ancient Israel with Canaanite culture, it soon slips into lyrical mode with evocations of the Paleontological Punctuated Equilibrium and the Axial Age, to make up for the lack of directly relevant evidence. Gnuse portrays a particularly creative Yahwistic minority who spearheaded the great monotheistic breakthrough during the exilic period. This genial minority:

> could accomplish its goal only because Israel was a peripheral people, free from the restraining social and economic forces operative in the great river valley cultures of Egypt and Mesopotamia. As a peripheral people they had access to the technological, political and social contributions of their neighbors, but they could fashion ideas together in a new matrix. Their intelligentsia, the prophets, Levites and priests, articulated these new ideas, especially as they came into contact with the expending Assyrian and Chaldean Babylonian empires and later went into exile … crises in the pre-exilic period caused the monotheistic development of this initially polytheistic or henotheistic Yahwistic faith …, and gradually transformed the religion of a small minority into the monotheistic religion of the masses. Only the Babylonian exile was capable of galvanizing these new values together and impressing them upon the people, who thereby became the Jews. These Jews returned to Palestine and made their monotheistic faith into the religion of all people in post-exilic Judah, and eventually the Diaspora Jews took their new religion out to the farther reaches of the ancient world.[44]

This remarkable depiction of highland Israelites on the cutting edge of the great intellectual revolution of monotheism is problematic on several counts. First, the opposition between Mesopotamia and Egypt, designated as preaxial civilizations, and the axial civilization of Israel and Greece fails to recognize that the

44. Gnuse, *No Other Gods,* 338–9.

transformations that occurred in Greece and Israel between 800 and 200 BCE "fall in line with similar developments in the intellectual history of the ancient Near East".[45] Second, the validity of the concept of revolution has recently been questioned,[46] but, if it is maintained, the revolution has to be put in relation to centers of culture, because successful revolutions are hardly the deed of peripheral people. Finally, the importance of the exile and the return is faithful to the biblical scenario, but it cannot be taken as historical reality upon which to found a major innovation such as monotheism. The days of the Omrides afford the necessary levels of intercultural connectivity. Finally, Gnuse's scenario ignores the influence of Plato in the rise of absolute monotheism.[47]

Hence, the claim that highland Israelites were on the cutting edge of the great intellectual revolution of monotheism is a reflection of American social memory, in particular the social memory of democratically minded academics, but it is not rooted in ancient reality as it can be reconstructed. In fact, the material culture suggests that Yahweh's rise to prominence in the days of the Omride dynasty is the phase that marks the first identifiable turning point in the rise of biblical monotheism. Others have suggested the reign of Saul, who would have "promoted his tribal deity, Yahweh, to a national status, in order to bring unity in the kingdom."[48] I fully agree with the notion of Yahwism as a powerful means to unite the Israelite kingdom. Due to the dearth of sources concerning the tenth century BCE, the attribution of this process to Saul is precarious, more so than the days of the Omrides. The second phase in the rise of biblical monotheism occurred in Jerusalem.

7.2.5 Anti-Baal Deuteronomism

That the Omrides were the first Yahwists in Israel's history is supported by the non-biblical sources but it stands in sharp contrast to the biblical portrayal of the reigns of Omri, Ahab and their immediate successors. The handful of verses dedicated to Omri focus on the illegitimacy of his rule, as he was crowned by the army, and on the illegitimacy of the capital he built away from traditional centers of power (1 Kgs 16.16–25). Compared with the minimal report on Omri, the Book of Kings devotes a greater amount of space to the reign of Ahab than to that of any other Israelite king. Ahab himself only appears in the background of the deeds of Elijah. More than anywhere else, the biblical treatment of Ahab's

45. Beat Pongratz-Leisten, "A New Agenda for the Study of the Rise of Monotheism," in *Reconsidering the Concept of Revolutionary Monotheism* (ed. B. Pongratz-Leisten; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 1–40 (14).

46. See the contributions in *Reconsidering the Concept of Revolutionary Monotheism* (ed. B. Pongratz-Leisten; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011).

47. Christoph Auffarth, "Justice, the King and the Gods: Polytheism and Emerging Monotheism in the Ancient World," in *One God–One Cult–One Nation* (eds R. G. Kratz et al.; BZAW 405; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2010), 421–53 (424–5).

48. Sitali, "Jewish Monotheism," 50, quoting Van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 266–7.

reign is at loggerheads with the material culture recovered through archaeological research. In Ahab's case, the Deuteronomistic "historian" was even less interested in what actually happened in Israel than is the case with other rulers.

The Deuteronomistic ideologues strove to paint a picture of the Omrides that is very different from what still can be inferred from non-biblical sources. That the city Omri built from scratch became what it was for the audience of Kings could be taken as a proof of divine favor. Ahab's marriage to a Tyrian princess could have made him equal to Solomon and would have overshadowed Jerusalem's Golden Age (compare 1 Kgs 16.31 and 1 Kgs 3.1). It was thus essential to slur the reputation of the Omrides, especially the one whose greatness is attested to in Assyrian and Moabite sources, and probably also in the royal annals quoted in 1 Kgs 16.27; 22.39. The accusations of Baalism leveled at Ahab and his successors are the linchpin of the Deuteronomistic portrayal of the Omrides and, for this reason, Ahab's Baalism must be decoded in order to reconstruct the rise of monotheism.

In light of the sharp contrast between the Yahwism of the Omrides attested by the non-biblical material and the ferocious portrayal of Ahab as the arch-enemy of Yahwism in the Book of Kings, it is clear that to tell "the story of the rise of monotheism is to depart from the books of the Bible as they have come down to us."[49] Elijah's anti-Baal polemics tend to be given too much credence in reconstructions of the religion of Israel, when in fact they are a key element in Jerusalem's representation of the northern Israelite kingdom as hopelessly given to the sin of Jeroboam. It is a fatal mistake to take this portrayal for the actual situation in monarchic Israel. Were Elijah and Jehu the champions of traditional Israelite religion, they would have championed El, the god of Bethel and Israel.

As Jerusalem sought to define itself in opposition to the rival sanctuary of Bethel, there would have been minimal gain in sponsoring El and presenting Jerusalem merely as the heir of Israel's original religion. Jerusalem had little choice but to turn Elijah and Jehu into champions of the fight against Baal. While the interaction with the great empires is considered to be one of the factors in the rise of biblical monotheism,[50] the rivalry with nearby Bethel should be stressed, since Bethel was probably a greater concern for the literati who produced Deuteronomistic texts than the various empires with whose elite they necessarily collaborated and from whom they derived various advantages.[51] The relentless denigration of Ahab in the Elijah cycle is highly significant and constitutes the second turning point in the rise of biblical monotheism.

Clearly, this turning point occurred in Jerusalem, where it served to establish a Judahite identity in contradistinction to that of the kingdom of Israel and with the rival sanctuary of Bethel. The slurring of the Omrides could have started as early as the fall of Samaria to the Assyrians in 722–720 BCE.

In light of the present trend in dating much of the production of the Hebrew Bible to the Persian era, 720 BCE certainly seems too early a date for the beginning

49. Pongratz-Leisten, "New Agenda," 39.

50. Smith, *God in Translation,* 179–80.

51. Pongratz-Leisten, "New Agenda," 39.

of the Deuteronomistic struggle against Baal. The Persian period is far more fashionable and is supported by the claim that the Persian Empire relied heavily on the Phoenicians' seafaring capabilities. Hence, anti-Baal texts in the Hebrew Bible likely reflect Persian era realities when the Phoenicians were Baal's main proponents.[52]

The influence of the kingdoms of Tyre and Sidon over Israel and Judah certainly culminated at this time, as the Achaemenids granted them parts of the southern Levantine coast.[53] Yet, the Phoenician influence was exerted over the kingdoms of the Southern Levant well before the Persian era. Therefore, there is no need to wait for the Persian period to date the process that led to the depiction of the Omrides as opponents of Yahweh.

The historical significance of the Exile, and of the Return, for this phase in the rise of monotheism is also overrated.[54] I would refrain from setting a more precise time bracket for the production of Deuteronomistic texts like the Elijah cycle than at some time between the end of the Israelite Samaria period and the first part of the Persian era (700–450 BCE). The identification of particular points in Judah's past that would have seen the rise of revolutionary monotheism is misleading and room should be made for microprocesses.[55] While the rise of anti-Baalistic Deuteronomism is more diffuse and is not as easy to pinpoint as are the days of the Omrides, the two phases implicated foreignness.

Whereas the Omrides sponsored outsiders (Yahweh, Jael, Deborah) to override tribal sensibilities, the Deuteronomist ideologues turned Ahab into a "pagan," an apostate in the pay of the Sidonians, hardly an Israelite at all. In this, the Deuteronomists took over the Omride redefinition of Israel as the people of Yahweh rather than simply the people of El. But, to engineer a Judahite identity distinct from that of the kingdom of Israel and present themselves as the heirs of the "true" Israel, they accused every Israelite monarch, except Saul, of having abandoned Yahweh and having sponsored the worship of Baal. In a rather ironical fashion, the "sin of Jeroboam" marks the triumph of Omride Yahwism, which

52. Jon L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach* (Fortress, 1995; repr., Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 58; Diana Edelman, "Tyrian Trade in Yehud under Artaxerxes I: Real or Fictional? Independent or Crown Endorsed?," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period* (eds O. Lipschits and M. Oeming; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 207–46; Oded Lipschits, "Achaemenid Imperial Policy, Settlement Processes in Palestine, and the Status of Jerusalem in the Middle of the Fifth Century B.C.E," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Persian Period*, (eds O. Lipschits and M. Oeming; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 26–27.

53. Edelman, "Tyrian Trade," 207–46. The notion that Baal Shamem was the most popular or highest deity in this region during the first millennium BCE is refuted by Karen Engelken, "BAʿALŠAMEN: Eine Auseinandersetzung mit der Monographie von H. Niehr, Teil I," *ZAW* 108 (1996): 233–48.

54. The return from Babylon is given much weight in Sitali, "Jewish Monotheism," 47–54.

55. Pongratz-Leisten, "New Agenda," 38–40.

became the corner-stone of Deuteronomist identity. Jerusalem saw itself as the sole guardian of the Mosaic legacy, understood as the foundation of Yahwism.[56] If the Omrides had indeed used "baal" as an epithet for Yahweh, insisting that Yahweh was Samaria's lord, the Deuteronomists reversed the equation. Baal was not Yahweh. Baal was the opposite of Yahweh. Hence, the second major phase in the rise of monotheism, the integration of Yahwism at Jerusalem, is built on a paradox. To absorb the Yahwism of the Omrides, it produces a relentless polemic against Baal in order to appropriate Baal imagery for Yahweh. The first phase involved giving a different name to Israel's Baal while the second phase emptied Baal of his substance and turned him into an idol. The second phase is the follow-up to the first phase, but it was incumbent on the Deuteronomists to claim that their theology went back to Moses himself and had nothing to do with the Omrides. Yet, the Deuteronomistic battle against Baal was not a return to the original religion of Israel. To set itself as the sole heir of the northern kingdom, Jerusalem had to denigrate Bethel's Elism. To do so, it had to accept the Omride legacy of Yahwism. Peripheral Judah remained in the shadow of the northern kingdom even after the dismembering of the kingdom of Israel into Assyrian provinces. Although late monarchic onomastics attest to the widespread presence of Yahwism in Judah as much as in Israel, the Hebrew Bible evokes Yahweh as the "God of Israel" about 250 times, never as the God of Judah.[57] Obviously, one cannot infer from this that the title "*Yahweh elohe Israel*" goes back to the Omrides. It is likely that this title reflects the religious community of Yahweh worshippers in the Persian era. Yet, that Yahweh would be identified with Israel centuries after the disappearance of Israel as a significant political entity supports rather than denies the connection between Yahwism and the Israelite kingdom.

Nor should the Deuteronomistic battle against Baal and Asherah be viewed as a step towards monotheism. Far from denying the existence of Baal, it creates an artificial dichotomy between Yahweh and Baal. Rejecting the Omride presentation of Yahweh as Israel's lord was the prerequisite to the appropriation of storm-god imagery for Yahweh. The appropriation was mostly polemical and the bulk of the texts discussed in Chapter 5 can be ascribed to this second stage in the rise of monotheism, a Deuteronomistic phase that must be connected with the Omrides' elevation of Yahweh as the god of Samarian Israel. The polemics against Asherah, on the contrary, reified the goddess and strove to turn her into a mere pole (§4.3.1).

Such poles were probably erected atop the large carved stones, the so-called proto-Aeolic capitals, which were found at large sites in the kingdom of Israel (Hazor, Megiddo and Samaria). The sheer size of these carved stones renders their standard interpretation as capitals very dubious, and an alternative interpretation

56. Although originally, the god of the Exodus may have been El. See Smith, *Origins*, 146–8.

57. D. Edelman, "David in Israelite Social Memory," in *Remembering Biblical Figures in the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods* (eds D. Edelman and E. Ben Zvi; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 141–57.

is that they were decorated bases for Asherah poles.[58] If so, the fact that these stones became fashionable in Jerusalem, Ramat Rahel and in Judean glyptics would be an important marker for the presence of both Asherah and her consort El in the Judahite pantheon.[59] That the polemics against the asherah and the asheroth do not target El but are found within anti-Baal polemics indicates that monotheism was not what the Deuteronomist ideologues were aiming for. Their effort to ascribe to themselves the Yahwism of the Omrides was not meant to challenge El's position at the top of the pantheon.

7.2.6 Elohim and the Priestly Code

Early in the Persian period, the Priestly Code was produced, and it now constitutes the narrative thread of the Torah and Joshua. This continuous narration of the origins of Israel spans the Creation to the death of Moses or until the settlement of the children of Israel in Canaan.[60] It is viewed as reflecting an intellectual revolution that involved the synthesis of various understandings of the divine rather than one aimed at the overthrow of former concepts.[61] One significant achievement of the Priestly Code is the claim it makes that all the various divine names ultimately refer to the same god, Elohim. Hence, the creator in Genesis 1 is designated as Elohim, used without the article, as a proper name. Then, Moses is informed that Elohim is Yahweh but that he appeared as El Shadday to Israel's forefathers (Exod. 6.3). Throughout its narration, the Priestly Code delineates a non-violent notion of the divine that stands in sharp contrast to the violent Deuteronomism embodied by Elijah and Jehu. It has been described as "inclusive monotheism" since the use of the term god (Elohim) as a proper noun includes every other designation and name of gods. "Others may venerate him as Zeus or Ahuramazda, but actually, it is just God."[62] This kind of inclusiveness comes closer to monotheism than the virulent anti-Baalism of the Deuteronomists.

The inclusiveness of the Priestly Code may be a new phenomenon in Israel, but it had precursors in the shrinking of the pantheon that Assyriologists described as "equalizing theology."[63] Late Babylonian texts contend that other deities are

58. N. Franklin, "From Megiddo to Tamassos and Back: Putting the 'Proto-ionic Capital' in its Place," in *The Fire Signals of Lachish* (eds I. Finkelstein and N. Na'aman; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 129–40.

59. See Köckert, "YHWH," 358–9.

60. For the debate over the end of P, see Philippe Guillaume, *Land and Calendar. The Priestly Document from Genesis 1 to Joshua 18* (LHBOTS 391; New York: T&T Clark International, 2009), 157–63.

61. K. Schmid, "The Quest for 'God': Monotheistic Arguments in the Priestly Texts of the Hebrew Bible," in *Reconsidering the Concept of Revolutionary Monotheism* (ed. B. Pongratz-Leisten; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 271–89 (289).

62. Schmid, "Quest", 285.

63. Gerlinde Baumann, "Trendy Monotheism? Ancient Near Eastern Models and Their Value in Elucidating Monothesim in Ancient Israel," *Old Testament Essays* 19 (2006): 9–25.

aspects of Marduk, or of Ninurta.[64] Political and diplomatic considerations motivated these theological elaborations, as much in Mesopotamia as in Palestine. In claiming that El Shadday, Yahweh and Ahuramazda were different names for the same Elohim, the Priestly Code displayed its loyalty to the Persian overlord while remaining faithful to its own indigenous traditions.[65] The significance of the Priestly Code's contribution to the rise of monotheism is often missed, because the very existence of such a document remains debated due to the many additions that were inserted into it, often with the aim of "deuteronomizing" its original message. Nevertheless, the Priestly Code is the most easily identifiable layer in the Pentateuch thanks to its more peaceful theology, compared to the aggressive stance typical of Deuteronomistic texts.

The claim in Exod. 6.3 that the Patriarchs only knew the god under the designation "El," setting Moses as the founder of Yahwism, does not reflect the historical reality of the rise of Yahwism, for two reasons. First, the biblical periodization does not correspond to historical periods. The Patriarchal Era cannot be dated and placed before an equally hypothetical Mosaic Era. Second, the notion that Yahweh waited for Moses before revealing himself under his proper name is a literary device used in the Priestly Document only.[66] It is contradicted by the second creation narrative in Genesis 2–4, which mentions Yahweh and thus ruins the narrative logic of the Priestly Code.

The equation Yahweh-Elohim in the Priestly Document goes a step further than Abram's oath in the name of Yahweh El Elyon in Genesis 14. The phrase "El is Yahweh" (יהוה אל) in Ps. 118.27 and Abraham's evocation of El Olam in Genesis 21.33 appropriate various epithets of El for Yahweh without implying that Yahweh has eliminated the pantheon. In fact, the tree Abraham plants in Genesis 21.33 preserves the memory of the association of El with Asherah.

John Day surmises that the linkage between Zaphon and Jerusalem (Pss. 46; 48) was not the result of Yahweh's takeover of Baal's holy mountain but rather was mediated via the cult of El-Elyon, since Isa. 14.13–14 establishes a connection between Zaphon and Elyon. Day attributes this cult of Elyon to the Jebusites, dating it to during the reign of David.[67] The whole notion of a Jebusite population is controversial,[68] and it is precarious to base the origin of a Zaphonic religion on a single verse, especially when it would have existed in times for which very little information has come to light.

The non-polemical portrayals of Yahweh as a seated El-type deity in Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1; Ps. 9.8 (Eng. 9.7), "Yahweh sits enthroned for ever," and Ps. 113.5, "Who is like Yahweh our God, who is seated on high," correspond to a later phase rather than to the original stature of Yahweh before the Iron Age. The search

64. Smith, *God in Translation*, 170–5.

65. Schmid, "Quest", 288.

66. See Guillaume, *Land and Calendar,* 12–30.

67. Day, *Yahweh and the Gods*, 116.

68. Ulrich Hübner, "Jerusalem and the Jebusites," in *Jerusalem before Islam* (eds Z. Kafafi and R. Schick; Oxford: Archaeopress, 2007), 17–22.

for origins is too precarious to provide a solid foundation for the rise of biblical monotheism.

7.2.7 Second Isaiah and the Non-Polemical Assimilation of Asherah

The transference of motherly traits associated with Asherah in Isaiah 44 and 46 (§3.2) obviously happened in the Persian period, since Cyrus is mentioned in Isa. 44.28. That the transference is not overtly polemical is coherent with the non-violent stance of the Priestly Code. The change of attitude reveals an awareness of the need to go beyond the Deuteronomistic polemics that bundle Asherah with Baal. The non-polemical transference of Asherah's role in fertility and childbearing is another aspect of Yahweh's appropriation of El-traits by means of El's paredra. The process, however, was a long one and it was not complete before the Hellenistic era.

7.2.8 Hellenism and the Assimilation of El

The identification Yahweh-El was not the object of any recorded debate as there is no explicit polemic against El in Jerusalemite texts.[69] The absence of polemic, however, does not imply that the process of identification of Yahweh with El occurred early or that it was simple to accomplish. It is possible that El was the original god of the Exodus, and, thus, was the god of pre-Omride Israel and the deity worshipped at Bethel.[70] The absence of external sources precludes any affirmation; it is possible, though, that the inhabitants of the incipient kingdom of Israel worshipped El at Bethel and at Shiloh, a tradition continued at Elephantine, where Bethel is a divine name. In this sense, the prominence of El in early Israel would have been a conservative reflection of the theological situation transmitted at Ugarit, a stance that ignores Baal's challenge of El's supremacy. This, however, remains hypothetical.

What is clear is that it is only in Daniel 7, in one of the latest books of the Hebrew Bible, that Yahweh is ascribed old-age imagery typical of El, as the "Ancient of Days" with "hair like wool."[71] It is only at this moment, when Yahweh is fully equated with El, that Yahwism can be properly considered a monotheistic religion. The lateness of Daniel 7 and of the acrostic-telestic of Nahum 1 (§6.2) suggests that the identification of Yahweh as a Baal-type divinity delayed the transference of El characteristics until the Hellenistic era, precisely when pagan monotheisms were also at the height of their development.[72]

Plato's philosophical monotheism did not become influential before the Hellenistic and Roman period.[73] The loss of confidence in the historicity of

69. Smith, *Early History of God*, 33; Chalmers, "Who is the Real El?," 611–30 suggests that Hosea contains a polemic against the worship of El at Bethel.

70. Smith, *Origins*, 146–8.

71. See Jason Bembry, *Yahweh's Coming of Age* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011).

72. See the contributions in *One God. Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire* (eds S. Mitchell and P. van Nuffelen; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

73. Auffarth, "Justice," 446.

the biblical account of the Exodus and in the figure of Moses as the founder of monotheism has opened the way to the realization that biblical religion only became monotheistic as a consequence of the interaction of Jewish scholars with their Hellenistic colleagues:

> monotheism (in the sense that we use this term today, as the philosophical principle that there can be only one deity or absolute divine principle, called Yahweh, Allah, or the unique and Trinitarian God of Christianity) is not an internal development of biblical thought. More probably it was reached due to the need to adapt the biblical conception of God to the philosophical categories circulated by Hellenism.[74]

Although the turning points I have identified here do give the impression that the rise of biblical monotheism was the result of an evolutionary process, it should be clear that monotheism was not the aim of the key actors of this intellectual venture. The concept of monotheism was unknown to the Omrides, the Deuteronomists, the writers of the Priestly Code and of Second Isaiah. Yahwism became a properly monotheistic religion when under Persian rule it became clear that imperial structures became ingrained to the point that there would be no return to the independent kingdoms and city-states the Assyrians had destroyed. A certain amount of autonomy could be obtained but it had to be negotiated with the great powers of the time. The circles of power were ever more remote. Interaction with the Assyrians had been mediated through Aramaic and had thus retained the element of kinship that Israel had experienced during the short-lived empire of Bar Haddad of Damascus. While the Assyrians destroyed neither Samaria nor Jerusalem, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem. The Persians rebuilt it, but mostly in a tense context of confrontation between far-away Persians and more familiar Egyptians, who meddled with some ever more distant newcomers: Greeks, Macedonians and even Romans.

Rather than fostering stability, the globalization of political power brought about greater instability. Whereas Cyrus was hailed as Yahweh's Messiah (Isa. 45.1), Cyrus's successors became locked in a deadly struggle with Egypt that eventually proved fatal to the Achaemenid Empire. The Southern Levant was then caught in the eye of the cyclone during the Syrian wars between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids. The arrival of Rome on the Levantine scene brought no respite, except that it revived expectations of independence, through the establishment of the short-lived Hasmonean kingdom.

The remoteness of the circles of power combined with constant instability required the transfer of the source of justice to a higher realm. The confrontation between young warrior gods was relevant as long as the kingdoms of Israel and Judah fought their neighbors or one another. Setbacks could be attributed

74. Florentino García Martínez, "Abraham and the Gods: The Path to Monotheism in Jewish Religion," in *Between Philology and Theology* (eds H. Najman and E. Tigchelaar; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 3–16 (14).

to Yahweh's anger caused by the worship of the *baalim,* brothers and rivals of Yahweh. Ritual performances of contrition were often followed by returns to fortune and thus seemed to propitiate Yahweh. Any return, however, did not imply monotheism. The *baalim* and the *asheroth* were in fact a prerequisite in a spatial model in which the different gods had inherited their individual realms (§2.1.3). Well into the Hellenistic era, the Deuteronomistic solution, which identifies Baalism as the cause of all evils and a return to Yahweh as the only way out, retained its validity in the eyes of those who organized prophetic literature and its eventual canonization as the official commentary of the Torah. The insights of the Priestly Code and of Second Isaiah hardly modified the militancy of the Deuteronomistic scheme that requires the othering of the "other gods" to express the exclusivity of Yahweh.

This theological construction, however, was inadequate in the atmosphere of Hellenism. The elevation of the divine realm above the vagaries of political contingencies led to the spiritualization of David in the Psalms and Chronicles. It is at this moment that Plato's "principle of the *summum bonum,* the Good *per se,*"[75] could raise Yahweh-Elohim above the material world, beyond the reach of any human empire, but nevertheless in a world conceived in imperial terms. Although they fought one another as relentlessly as the kinglets of Palestine had, emperors claimed to rule the four corners of the world. Yet, it was centuries after Israel and Judah experienced Assyrian imperialism that Yahweh was eventually identified as a supreme El-type god able to take a stand above the endless squabbles of all of his children. The gods had to be declared mere mortals, as they are in Psalm 82, to eliminate the pantheon. Eventually, the Jews claimed that Plato had traveled to Egypt where Moses taught him monotheism—unless it was Jeremiah.[76]

Hence, the stages delineated here to map the rise of biblical monotheism should not be conceived as a linear evolutionary scheme from polytheism towards monotheism, with a gradual narrowing of the pantheon through the mere absorption of the domains of the other gods.[77] The equation Yahweh-El is more a matter of megatheism than incipient monotheism or henotheism.[78]

In a supratheistic configuration, the fact that God is alone is a side effect of the requirement that God stands above and in greater isolation from the chaotic world in order to supply an inalterable and unchangeable source of justice. As *summum bonum*, God is immutable, a notion consolidated thanks to the mechanist view of the divine once the occurrence of eclipses could be calculated in advance. Religious practice, in theory, leans towards ethics, while divination should become unnecessary. It is through the study of the principle of good that

75. Auffarth, "Justice," 442.

76. D. Ridings, *The Attic Moses. The Dependency Theme in Some Early Christian Writers* (Göteborg: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1995).

77. Auffarth, "Justice," 432.

78. A. Chaniotis, "Megatheism: The Search for the Almighty God and the Competition of Cults," in *One God: Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire* (eds S. Mitchell and P. van Nuffelen; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 112–40.

the divine can and will be known and, because it is immutable, predictable and reliable. There is no need to seek it through divinatory methods. The critique of divination in Deuteronomy 13 and 18 reflects a certain awareness of this fact. The same can be said about propitiation, but the amount of space devoted to sacrifices in the Torah suggests that propitiation was still viewed as essential, for economic considerations if nothing else. If God is the source of justice, righteous behavior renders sacrifices obsolete, as claimed in Isa. 66.1; Jer. 7.22; Amos 5.25 and that God needs no feeding (Isa. 1.11; Ps. 50.8–14), in any case a minor voice in the Hebrew Bible. The main challenge, however, is the matter of evil. Job and Isaiah present two logical but unpractical solutions, which again indicates the lateness of the emergence of strict monotheism. Had Josiah inaugurated it, one would expect more echoes of this debate in the Hebrew Bible.

7.3 Recapitulation

Having reached the end of this discussion, it is time to recapitulate the journey covered in the present volume. To trace the process that resulted in Yahwistic monotheism, Chapter 1 delineates the two paradigms commonly used in scholarship to explain the emergence of monotheism. These paradigms are deemed mutually exclusive. Any attempt to harmonize them is inadequate for explaining the emergence of monotheism. Of these paradigms, the native pantheon position is more tenable than the early-monotheistic Yahwism model (Chapter 2) but the lack of relevant sources prior to the ninth century BCE leads the author to consider both models inadequate and to elaborate in Chapter 7 an alternative reconstruction paradigm for the rise of biblical monotheism in five main stages (§§7.2.1–5), a model that abstains from postulating the form of Israel's "original" religion. The days of the Omrides constitute the first Archimedean point upon which any reconstruction can rely.

To delineate how biblical writers accomplished Yahweh's appropriation of Baal's domain, Chapter 3 sets out to distinguish between biblical texts that use polemics, implied polemics and non-polemical transference. This new typology for conceptualizing how Yahweh's takeover of the pantheon was displayed provides a simple way of cataloguing instances of Yahweh's appropriations in the Hebrew Bible.

The portrayal of Baal at Ugarit is delineated in Chapter 4. Against this backdrop, Chapter 5 examined some instances of head-on anti-Baal polemics, and Chapter 6 continued with implicit polemics and non-polemical transference texts. In light of the historical reconstruction of the rise of monotheism in Chapter 7, it is clear that most of the overt anti-Baal polemics belong to the Deuteronomistic phase. As most Israelite texts were reworked in Jerusalem, it is barely possible to know whether some non-polemical transference of Baal's domain to Yahweh had already occurred in Samaria. Non-polemical transference certainly occurred in the Persian era. The non-violent stance of the Priestly Code and of Second Isaiah was conducive to the convergence of the divine council and to the view that all gods are but different names for Elohim. The non-polemical appropriation of

motherly traits for Yahweh belongs to that phase, too, when the association of Asherah with Baal in the Deuteronomistic polemics had lost some of its appeal. By contrast, the assimilation of El's domain and traits required the pervading philosophical flowering of Hellenism to reach maturity. It is only at that point that biblical Yahwism could be considered properly monotheistic and could then, as it did, give rise to three monotheistic religions.

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